BING

Summer
2012

No. 161

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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BING magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
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All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::

(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins

(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the summer issue of BING. Hard to fathom that we've passed the half way point of another year, and an anniversary year at that. This October 14th will mark the 35th anniversary of Bing's passing, incredible as it may seem. A more pleasant anniversary was noted this past May 18th, when Canonsburg, Pennsylvania celebrated the 100th birthday of one of its most famous residents, Perry Como. The "other" Mr. C passed away on May 12, 2001.

We've reached the end of the road in the series of albums that began in 1984, when John McNicholas issued the first volume of what was projected to be a long series of LPs bearing the title 'The Chronological Bing Crosby'. The series reached 13 LPs by 1990, and then switched to CD. By 2007, some 51 albums had been issued. Then came the transition from Volume 51 in the Chronological Crosby series in 2007 to Volume 1 of "Through the Years" from Sepia in 2008. "Through the Years" on the Sepia label has now reached Volume 10 and the end, some 61 CDs in all. The CD sequence took from 1996 until early 2012, and those who possess them, own all of Bing's commercially recorded output from 1926, on into 1957. I urge all members to support the series. Those in the USA and Canada should contact Wig for availability of previous volumes.

This past January, I undertook the responsibility of a weekly radio series. It's something I had thought about doing for some time, but never dreamed could be done right from the comfort of my home. I set up a make-shift studio, and am able to record the shows to a laptop computer, save them as MP3 files, and e-mail them direct to the station (some 40 miles from here) for airing. Without ever leaving the house. If only this technology would've been available to Bing. He would've loved that! The hour-long series is called *Nostalgia Radio Time*, and features a half-hour of music, followed by a complete half-hour old time radio show. See "Bing on the Box" for more details. A major part of the show is the 'Bing Sings' feature, so our man is well represented with a different song each week.

Greg Van Beek

Thanks, Greg. It is indeed sad that the Sepia series has finished. As many of you will know, there was a hiccup with volume 10 as somehow the wrong track was used for the alternate take of "Someday, Sweetheart". Wig spotted this in time and we were able to arrange for a substitute CD to be re-pressed with the correct track on it. There is a detailed independent appraisal of the Sepia releases later in this issue which will probably annoy many of you but I felt that we ought to read what others think – even if we do not agree. We are talking to Richard Tay of Sepia about other possible Crosby issues, perhaps next year.

We are certainly missing those great releases from Robert Bader at Bing Crosby Enterprises at the moment but the good news is that there are plans for additional releases from BCE in the very near future, as well as a bit more exciting news - stay tuned!

This issue of BING has a wide variety of articles for your consideration. We range from Greg Van Beek's interview with singer Peggy King, who describes working with Bing, to an in-depth comparison of Bing and Elvis Presley. There's an update concerning Gary Giddins and his second volume about Bing, Keith Parkinson looks at *Sing You Sinners* and we reproduce a fascinating article by the late Lionel Pairpoint about Bing's involvement with the "soaps". Gord Atkinson is back with details of a memorable meeting with Bing in 1966 and all the other regulars are here too.

Our front cover was prepared by Jon Oye for the Woodbury CD we issued a year or two back and it's so good we wanted to use it again. The back cover has a great picture of Bing and Kathryn at the Palladium in 1977. The photo on this page shows Bing on the February 1969 Bob Hope Special. He's performing "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along". Greg Van Beek supplied the photo and he believes Bing is wearing the same hat he wore in *High Society* when he sang "True Love" with Grace Kelly, some 13 years prior!

In recent months, with considerable help from Richard Baker, the ICC's web site has been revamped and should be accessed through www.club-crosby.org from now on. Also please note Wig's new email address on the inside cover.

I look forward to meeting some of you at Leeds in October!

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

I would like to begin my report by thanking our North American members for their generous donations which are timely and help ensure that the ICC is soundly financed for 2013. The club could not provide an excellent service without the magnanimous support of our benefactors and I would like to plead with all members to be unstinting when they next renew their subscriptions. I will, as promised in the last issue, update members on our finances in December. Ingenious suggestions for ways to increase our funds would be very welcome.

One issue which frequently rears its head for your secretary is what members' dependants should do with their late relatives' collections. Depending on the size of the collection I suggest various options for relatives to follow. A large collection might be offered for auction or alternatively the collection can be advertised on eBay. Smaller collections I usually advise advertising via the club. The issue of how to proceed is often compounded by the fact that the late member has not made his wishes known and so the relatives do not know whether to sell the collection or give it away. Additionally there are now not many collectors with gaps in their collections so there is not the demand there used to be. I would welcome comment and suggestions on this difficult topic.

Now that the final issue of the Sepia series has been distributed to members I believe it timely to thank Wig Wiggins, John McNicholas, the engineers and the leading collectors for their resolute dedication in making the series possible. The sheer scale of their enterprise is a magnificent achievement and whilst ever Bing's commercial recordings are heard, the listeners, whilst playing these CDs, will be indebted to this dedicated team, who have provided us with over 1500 high quality recordings including some very rare test pressings and alternate takes.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members of the ICC with a wish that their involvement with the club will bring them interest and enjoyment as they share their hobby with fellow Bing enthusiasts.

BRAZIL

Efer Cilas Dos Santos Jnr. (Leblon, Rio de Janeiro)

UNITED KINGDOM

Malcolm Sumner (Cheltenham, Gloucestershire), Frank Hodkinson (Little Eaton, Derbyshire), Adrian Long (Tatworth, Somerset).

UNITED STATES

John Beavens (Helena, Montana), Richard Heman (Phoenix, Arizona), Kevin Greenlee (Indianapolis, Indiana), Don Peri (Davis, California), John Fasanello (Jackson, New Jersey), Louis Aragona (Whiting, New Jersey), Tim Cain (Lake Worth, Florida), Monte Ess (Seguin, Texas), Anton Garcia-Fernandez (Martin, Tennessee), Kyle Hufstedler (Rockford, Illinois), Phillip McCreary (Columbus, Georgia), Don Shenenberger (Chesapeake, Virginia), Jason Whiton (Mill Valley, California).

DONATIONS

We very much appreciate the much needed financial help provided by the following generous members.

CANADA

Alan Matheson, Scott Payne, Donald Roegele, Britton Smith.

GERMANY

Maria Roth.

IRELAND
Frank Brannigan, Paul Hennessey, Derek McNamee.
UNITED STATES
Scott Ables, Bill Alldread, Jack Boyle, Tom Chevrette, James Clifford, Don Cretella, Howard Crosby, Milton Cummings, David Currie, George De Lodzia, Stanley Diebel, Laurence Doyle, Joseph Duncan, Kent Edwards, Helen Feiereisen, Ron Field, David Foe, Arne Fogel, William Fowler, John Holland, Sean Joyce, Mike Kapitanis, Michael Keiser, Laurence Kieran, Albert Koenig, Marcia Kukla, Robert Larsson, Stanley Lebby, Joyce Lundberg, Ralph Morris, Paul Murphy, Al O'Hagan, Rev. Eugene Roberts, Judy Schmid, Marq Stankowski, Mike Strada, Robert Stratiff, Ernest Sutkowski, Charles Townsend, Greg Van Beek, Charles Van Riper, Charles Vincent, Ben Whiteley, Norman Wolfe and Judy Wysokowski.
UNITED KINGDOM
Harry C Ross, Tom Hughes, Bob Halls, Bert Bishop, Maggie Ryan, Professor John Norris-Wood, Dennis Saville, Roy Irvine, Frank Startup, Michael Tyce, John Bignell, Doreen Hubbard, Arthur Blood, Kevin Campbell, Ken Shaw.

USA members have been very generous this issue contributing almost $2,000 dollars to ICC funds. Without this support, which alongside the gifts given by the other members shown on this page and a few benefactors who give generously throughout the year, we would long ago have had to raise our subscriptions. We are most indebted to our generous supporters around the world.

DEATHS

We are saddened to learn of the deaths of the following members:-
Bill England (Worcester Park, Surrey), Jabey Gorman (Chester-le-Street, Co Durham), Frank Heiderer (San Diego, California), Howard Levine (Las Vegas, Nevada), David Soule (South Portland, Maine).

Howard Levine was said to have had the best collection of Bing's recordings in the world. As a young man, Howard built up a formidable collection of Bing's records and Joe Franklin interviewed him on his radio show about this whilst Howard was still a student in 1945. Jack Kapp of Decca heard the broadcast and arranged to meet Howard. Mr. Kapp arranged for Howard to meet Bing in November 1945 and in later years, Howard attended recordings of Bing's radio shows in New York. Subsequently Howard worked for Decca from 1953 to 1966 and he was responsible for producing the *Bing's Hollywood* series of LPs. He found himself in the position of having to write sleeve notes about Bing's early films which he had never seen! Howard was one of the small band of collectors who helped provide rare alternate takes for the acclaimed Jonzo/Sepia series.

We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the members listed above.

Howard Levine shows Malcolm Macfarlane his collection in 2001.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 1 to 10 (Sepia Records)
These attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.00 and the price for Europe £7.50. Members in the US & Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington. The price for members in the rest of the world is £8.50.

Volume 10, the final issue, has now been dispatched to members along with the replacement CD which contains the correct take of "Someday Sweetheart". **If you have not received your replacement CD then please advise me and I will send a copy to you.**

BING CROSBY and the KRAFT MUSIC HALL – ICC 75th anniversary issue.
This acclaimed CD remains available from me and you are welcome to send for additional copies if you require them.

CROSBY CALENDAR 2013
As per our request of last year we are asking members to order their calendar(s) in advance so that we can meet members' needs without ordering too few or too many copies. Please use the enclosed insert to place your order.

LEEDS 2012 (47th meeting)
Sunday October 7th 2012 is the date for your diary and a notice giving details will be found later in this issue. I look forward to meeting many of you there for what promises to be a superb meeting as always.

Michael Crampton

Bing Crosby Birthday Bash

To celebrate what would have been Bing's 109th birthday, the Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater held a birthday gathering on May 3 at the Bing Crosby Theater in Spokane and showed the 1951 film *Here Comes the Groom*. The film, directed by Frank Capra, starred Bing as a newspaper reporter who must win back his former fiancée or lose custody of the two orphans he has adopted. It won an Academy Award in 1952 for best song: "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of The Evening".

The gathering included birthday cake, coffee and punch, and a talk from Carol Capra, Frank Capra's daughter-in-law. Carol Capra is on the Advocates board, and shared remembrances of her legendary father-in-law.

Cake was served at 6 p.m. A selection of Crosby short films was screened at 6:30 p.m., followed at 7 p.m. by *Here Comes the Groom*. Admission was a suggested donation of $5.

Well done to the Advocates who are doing so much to keep Bing's name alive in his native town!

Incidentally, Bill Stimson, President of the Advocates, was asked to guess what would have become of Bing if the entertainer had not left Spokane.

> "I think he would have buckled down, finished law school, and opened a law practice, probably with a couple of law school pals. Everyone who knew him says he had the intelligence and discipline. Most of his childhood friends entered the professions – doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc. A modest legal practice would have placated his mother and provided the money to do what he really wanted to do, which was to look forward to spending summers boating and golfing with pals at Hayden Lake. After all, even after he made untold millions, that's what he chose to do with his summers."
>
> (As quoted in *The Spokesman-Review* on June 22)

And whilst talking about Spokane, we heard from **Howard Crosby** in June.

Bing at The Spokane Club

"I have enclosed a copy of the monthly magazine from The Spokane Club, a local private athletic club where Bing used to stay when he was back in Spokane. A few weeks back I gave them several photographs of Bing at the club, and they have published a couple of them in the magazine. These photographs came from a collection in our family's archive.

I continue to do all that I can to promote the legacy of Uncle Bing. I appreciate the article in the latest magazine about my Irish gig…it went over very well and I received a lot of attention, including a half hour interview during morning drive time on Radio One in Dublin.

This fall I may be doing a big charity gig in Texas, as some very big supporters of Ireland live there and would like me to come down and do something.

Keep up the good work.

All the Best,

Howard Crosby"

Bing movie night in Stillwater

Bing's mother, Kate Harrigan, was born in Stillwater, Minnesota in 1873 and on March 28th, there was a Bing movie night at the Washington County Historic Courthouse in Stillwater. Film historian Bob DeFlores screened films featuring Bing including *Please*, the 1933 Paramount short, "Wayne and Shuster Take an Affectionate Look at Bing Crosby," and a 30-minute home movie showing highlights from the crooner's home in Toluca Lake between 1935 and 1943. The scenes showed Bing playing tennis, horseback riding, swimming and attending parties.

Bing's mother is caught by the camera.

Bing on Mastermind

In our last edition we gave details of Malcolm Sumner's success in answering questions on Bing. Having won through that first round, he has unfortunately not managed to get through the second round which was shown on March 30. He was answering questions on the 19th Century British politician and Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. It was a very close thing though. There were five participants in the round at the end of which only three points separated them. The lowest score was 22, with Malcolm on 23 and the top score at 25, shared by two who had to have a run off.

Commiserations to Malcolm, who will not now have the opportunity of returning to the subject of Bing in a subsequent round. Readers may have noticed that Malcolm is one of the new members of the ICC listed on an earlier page.

The TCM Classic Film Festival

The third-annual TCM Classic Film Festival produced by TCM took place in Hollywood from April 12-15. The festival was launched appropriately with a Bing film!

Bing complicates Grace's nuptials

On the opening night, the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel (which itself had many Crosby connections) was the site of a poolside screening of the lavish Cole Porter musical *High Society* (1956), starring Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Bing. The press release went on: "The classic screwball comedy *The Philadelphia Story* gets a musical makeover from Cole Porter in this delightful toe-tapper starring Grace Kelly as a woman about to get married, only to have her impending nuptials complicated by her ex. Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby co-star opposite Kelly in her last film role."

Music In The Air

Your editor had a call from Kevin Howlett in May. Mr. Howlett is an acclaimed Beatles historian and he produced his first documentary about the Beatles' BBC recordings as a young Radio 1 producer in 1982. It made headlines around the world because Kevin tracked down many BBC Beatles sessions not heard since their original broadcasts. Out of the 53 BBC programmes with live Beatles music, just one was in the BBC Archive. Following further investigations, Kevin produced the award-winning *The Beeb's Lost Beatles Tapes* in 1988.

Kevin told me that he was now producing for BBC Radio 2 a six-part history of music radio called *Music in the Air* which will be presented by Paul Gambaccini. Naturally they want to cover the importance of Bing's radio work and Kevin had been going through the extensive data from Lionel Pairpoint's book on the BING magazine web site. He had also been listening to many of Bing's radio songs and he feels that Bing has been vastly underrated in recent years.

I supplied him with various radio recordings he wanted and we talked through some of the references to Bing in the script. Our Mr. Crosby will be featured in the first two shows in the series. The first one will be broadcast on BBC Radio2 on September 26 and it can be heard on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radio2. Should be an interesting programme!

Southend Film Festival

Ken Barnes has written regarding an upcoming Bing event in Southend, Essex in the UK.

"My reason for writing is the Southend Film Festival with which I am involved. Recently, they held an evening of 1930s classics which included Bing's *Pennies From Heaven*. The reaction was so good that I have been asked to do a two-hour presentation called BING CROSBY REMEMBERED. This will take place in the large ballroom of the Palace Hotel in Southend on October 21st. Hopefully, we will have input from Universal Pictures who are planning to re-issue *Holiday Inn* as a 70th Anniversary Special Edition. I'll be doing the presentation in partnership with my friend, jazz trumpet player, Digby Fairweather. And it's possible that Michael Parkinson will attend."

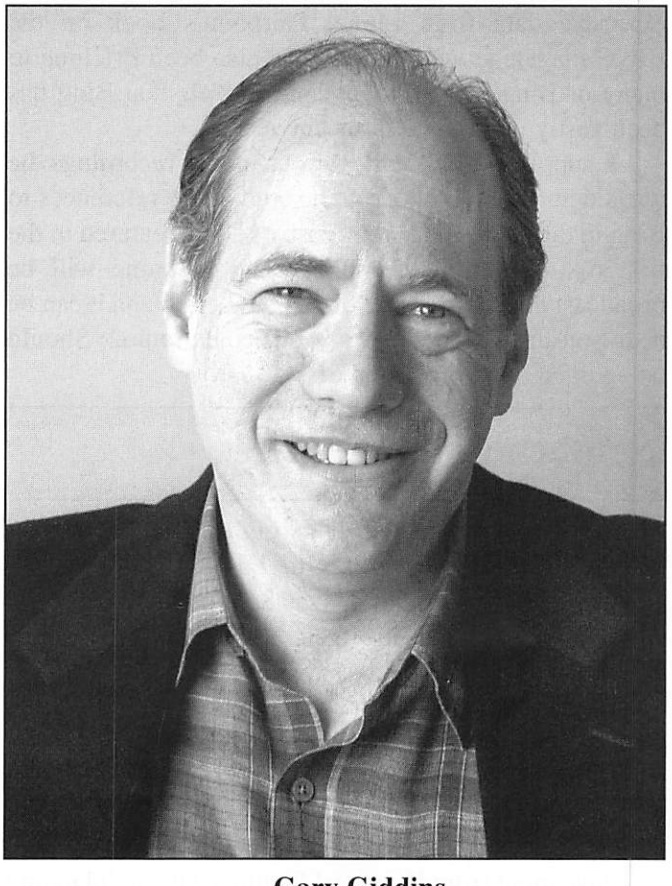
This sounds like a superb event and Ken is a wonderful presenter. Not to be missed if you can get there.

Gary Giddins

We are all eagerly awaiting Gary's second volume about Bing and it was interesting to see this mentioned in the Wall Street Journal of May 10.

More than a dozen years ago, jazz critic Gary Giddins made an appointment with his editor at the publisher William Morrow. Mr. Giddins had some very good news: He'd completed his manuscript of his long-aborning Bing Crosby biography. But Mr. Giddins also had a bit of bad news: It was merely volume one.

Well, in that case the editor had some bad news of her own: The nine-year-old project was being killed and the advance would have to be returned. "She said, 'Who's Bing Crosby? Is it someone our parents knew?'" recalled Mr. Giddins, who got a far more sympathetic hearing at Little, Brown & Co., which was immediately on board with the two-volume approach. In 2001, the company published the 768-page "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams—the Early Years (1903-1940)." As for Der Bingle's later years, "all I can say is I'm working every day," Mr. Giddins said.



Gary Giddins

It's an ever-shrinking group, the authors who are given the real estate between multiple sets of hardcovers to chronicle the life and times of their subjects. "I don't know of anyone who has gotten a contract for a multivolume biography in the last five years," said David Nasaw, a professor of history at CUNY Graduate Center, whose (one-volume) bio of Joseph P. Kennedy will be published in November. "God bless Bob Caro, but it's over."

Robert Caro, the pre-eminent practitioner of the very, very long form, has just published, to much tadaing, the 712-page "Passage of Power," the 10-years-in-the-making fourth volume of his biography of Lyndon Johnson, a project that began in 1974. The fifth and final installment is yet to come.

Perhaps the Caro fanfare will serve as a spur to Blanche Cook and Sylvia Jukes Morris. Ms. Cook is the author of a three-part biography of Eleanor Roosevelt. Volume one appeared in 1992 and volume two in 1999. The third installment "is under contract though not yet scheduled," according to a spokeswoman for Ms. Cook's publisher, Penguin, who declined to say more. Ms. Morris is the author of "A Rage for Fame," part one of a projected two-part bio of Clare Boothe Luce that came out in 1997. Fans continue to wait for the sequel; it too is under contract but unscheduled, said a spokeswoman at Random House, Ms. Morris's publisher, as is the fourth and final volume of John Richardson's biography of Pablo Picasso. Meanwhile, the second half of James Kaplan's 2010 Sinatra biography, "Frank: The Voice," is due out in 2015.

"The fact is, nobody plans to do more than one volume. It just sort of evolves," said Victoria Wilson, an editor at Knopf, and she should know: She's writing what had been envisioned as a single-volume biography of Barbara Stanwyck, but which has morphed into two volumes. "It became this larger thing, involving not just a history of Hollywood but a history of politics in Hollywood." Look for the first installment in 2013. Volume two? "There," said Ms. Wilson, "is the question."

Writer's block; the challenges of organizing such a mass of material; a cache of personal papers and correspondence that is suddenly made available and must be sifted through—all these can hold up the delivery of the second or fourth part of a multivolume work. "The immersive authority that's attained with a long biographical pursuit takes years. It just does," said Jonathan Karp, the publisher of Simon & Schuster, which will be releasing Ms. Wilson's Barbara Stanwyck opus.

But long delays present risks. "One issue is new readers," said Michael Congdon, a New York literary agent. "You don't know how many of them will be familiar with that author. They may not have even been born when the first volume came out."

Further, "if an inordinate amount of time passes between two linked volumes, there is a very real possibility that a publisher could fail to build on its own success, lose the interest of a dedicated following, or even cede ground to a competing work," said Nicholas

Latimer, publicity director at Knopf.

You can lose the interest of an author's loyal following, yes. You can also lose the author. See: Manchester, William, who passed away partway through work on the third and final volume of his Winston Churchill biography. Manchester's hand-picked successor, Paul Reid, a journalist and amateur historian, took the baton. "The Last Lion: Defender of the Realm (1940-1965)" will be published in November. (According to a profile in the May issue of Esquire, if Mr. Caro dies before completing the Johnson biography, his will requests that nobody finish it for him.)

Potential downsides notwithstanding—these include the high cost of translating so much text for foreign markets—some industry executives claim to be bullish on multivolume storytelling. "I wish there were more books that authors devoted years of their lives to writing," said Mr. Karp of Simon & Schuster. "The challenge is how to live on the amount that an advance normally is."

"I'm sure most publishers will tell you they're less willing these days to make long-term commitments," said Michael Pietsch, publisher of Little, Brown, whose list includes William Manchester. "But I've been here for 20 years, and the question most asked over that time is 'when is the third volume of Churchill coming out?' That's evidence that when you have a writer of this caliber, readers are there.

"When Peter Guralnick signed with another publisher to do an Elvis Presley bio, he was told 'I'm not sure about Elvis in two volumes,' continued Mr. Pietsch, referring to the author of "Last Train to Memphis" (1994) and "Careless Love" (1999). I was the lucky person he turned to. It was two volumes. I wish it had been longer."

Mr. Pietsch will undoubtedly be pleased to hear that his Crosby biographer is on the road not to Morocco but to the finish line. "I'm supposed to finish this year," Mr. Giddins conceded. "But the writers I most admire, like Robert Caro, belong to a group that says you put in everything of consequence. I don't skip anything. On the other hand, I have a 91-year-old mother who wants to know if she's going to live to read this book."

Joanne Kaufman

A Conversation with Pretty, Perky Peggy King

Greg Van Beek again comes up with something new!

This past April 12th, as a result of friend and fellow ICC member Anthony DiFlorio III putting me in touch with her, I had the pleasure of talking with pop singer Peggy King about her work with and her memories of Bing.

Hailing from Greensburg, PA, Peggy toured with the bands of Charlie Spivak, Ray Anthony and Ralph Flanagan before cutting a jingle for Hunts tomato sauce that got her signed by Mitch Miller to the Columbia record label. Her big break came in 1954 when she joined comedian George Gobel's popular television show as a regular cast member. In 1955, she was nominated for an Emmy for Best Female Singer, and was named Best New Singer by *Down Beat* magazine in 1956. Among her hit recordings was the 1955 album "Girl Meets Boy", joined by Jerry Vale and backed by Percy Faith & His Orchestra. She appeared on nearly all of the major TV variety shows of the era; Bob Hope, Jack Benny, Nat King Cole, Pat Boone, Ed Sullivan, Perry Como, Steve Allen, Eddie Fisher, Garry Moore, et al, in addition to her appearances in feature films. She performed "You Came A Long Way From St. Louis" in *Abbott & Costello Meet The Mummy*, and had a breakthrough role as stewardess Janet Turner in the 1957 Paramount Picture *Zero Hour*, which became the basis for the disaster spoof, *Airplane!* She left Hollywood in 1961. Currently she hosts a monthly program, "Off The Cuff", heard online at www.wyyr.com.

And, in between, she was Bing's guest on his March 14, 1954 CBS radio show for General Electric, which was recently rebroadcast on Sirius XM radio's '40s on 4 channel! Our conversation went as follows:

GVB: When did you first meet Bing?

PK: I first met Bing after I had been at MGM films under contract and found out that wasn't going to work out. So then I was doing a local TV show with Johnny Mercer and Bobby Troup, in which we wrote songs on the air and sang them. People in the audience would call songs out and then we would write songs on the air. That was pretty heavy company for a 19 year old kid like me! And, of course, Bing and Johnny Mercer were extraordinarily good friends. Sometimes when you listen to Bing's records, he sounds like Johnny to me. So anyhow, Bing was watching this show I was doing with Johnny and Bobby, and I would get little messages from Johnny, saying "Oh, Bing called last night and says he really likes you." I was just stunned that my name was even being passed around in Bing's company!

Not long after that, I went over to Bing's house with Gary (Crosby) for Christmas dinner. But Bing was mad at the boys for something they had done the night before and said "There isn't going to be any Christmas", and he cancelled Christmas dinner, so Gary and I went out to a restaurant instead. Bing was a real, true disciplinarian

when it came to the boys.

But I loved Bing, I was nuts about him. I always loved his singing voice and still do. I don't think there has been a singer who followed him who didn't take something from him. Every once in a while I'll do something while singing and I'll say "Ah, thanks Bing!", because I KNOW I took it from him. I was watching him from the time I was a little kid. Not that I would've ever said that to him, of course, because Bing didn't like to be older than you. At least that's how it seemed to me. Bing wanted to be forever young. And why not! He helped my career a lot. I would be trying to get a job or a gig and then I would hear from somebody that "Bing told us about you", which was just so nice of him. I never really quite figured out why me, you know, of all the singers that were around. When I asked Gary years later why his father chose me for all of this stuff, and Gary said, "Because you sing like him." I said, "I do?", and Gary said, "Yeah, that kind of laid back, sort've bringing you along very quietly style, that's how you sing." I said, "Well I heard your father all my life, so naturally I'm going to copy something from him. You take a little from Bing, you take a little from Frank (Sinatra), and you've got yourself a career!"

Peggy's first publicity photo for NBC in 1954.

This is my favorite Bing Crosby story. When I think of it, I fall down laughing. Everyone that knows me, knows this story. The Johnny Mercer TV show was going on at this time, but I also had my days free, and I got a phone call around Noon, and someone said, "This is the Bing Crosby show, Bing wants to know if you can come right over, someone got ill and had to leave, and he wants to know if you can come over and do the show. Bring two orchestrations with you." My first thought was this is a joke. But the man sounded absolutely sincere, and it was only about six blocks from here so I thought what have I got to lose?

GVB: Did you have any idea who it was that called you?

PK: No, it was just someone that worked for Bing Crosby. So I put some clothes on, grabbed a couple of arrangements of mine, and off I went. I got there about 12:30, so most people were out to lunch, but there was this one man just standing there and I thought he was the janitor. So I went up to him and said, "Pardon me, could you tell me where Mr. Crosby is?" And this man turned around to face me and said, "I am Mr. Crosby!" Well, I probably must've looked like I was going to faint, and Bing started to laugh and said, "It's alright, Peggy, let's go in here and start working on these songs of yours."

GVB: Bing generally always dressed casual for his radio shows

PK: Well this was a little more than casual, this was downright funky!

GVB: And he never wore his toupee, sometimes not even a hat.

PK: No, he didn't have a hat on, and so I wasn't used to him with very little hair. So I really didn't have any idea who it was. And from what I heard, he told that story to everyone he knew. He thought it was hilarious! Then he decided that we were going to sing a duet as well as my solo. We sang "That's Amore", and there I am, in the morning never even thinking of such a thing, and here I am at 12:30 rehearsing "That's Amore" with Bing Crosby! Not that I hadn't been around a lot of stars, I had, I was at Metro (MGM) for over a year and also did other work around town, I worked at the Mocambo and things like that, but I had not met and worked with a star of his stature. Who is in his stature, really? I mean there's Bing Crosby and everyone else. I had always wanted to sing with him, because I loved his singing. Always have. When we started singing together, it was like we had been singing together for years. No problems. He did that wonderful 'off-talk' that was his persona. It turned out that our voices were perfect together. Perfectly matched. From the first three notes I knew it was going to be okay. And he was grinning, he was really grinning.

GVB: It's likely that Bing had some of your records, or heard you on the radio and, as he would do especially while driving, began singing along with you and found that your voices and styles were quite similar.

PK: That's very possible. I wouldn't doubt that at all. I mean otherwise why would he take a chance on a newcomer like me?

GVB: Did you ever find out who was supposed to be the guest star on the show who became ill and had to go home?

PK: It was Rosemary Clooney. That was some

pretty heavy shoes to step into! I was very thrilled as you can imagine.

GVB: This show was recorded at CBS?

PK: Yes, at CBS radio

GVB: The show was recorded on February 28, 1954 and aired March 14. Bing also recorded the March 7th show that day with his guest Jana Mason.

PK: Have you heard of her? I haven't heard of her.

GVB: No, I hadn't

PK: I don't know who she is

GVB: I was wondering if you knew there were two shows taped that day, and how Bing managed to get both of them done in one day?

PK: No, we did the show in the early afternoon and there must've been another one at night then. We did our show very shortly after I got there. We ran through the songs and the orchestra came back and I gave them my other arrangement, which worked out really well, it was "Rock A Bye Your Baby", and you know Bing just adored Al Jolson so that worked out really well. Before we knew what hit us, we were on. It was just one of those really fast things.

GVB: Now this was at the very tail end of Bing's weekly variety radio show, which ended in May of 1954, so this was about two months prior to that. I had even heard that by this time, there was no studio audience at the tapings, that canned laughter and applause was edited in later.

PK: I thought there was an audience, but I did so many things, so I can't really make a positive statement one way or the other. I was so excited and nervous and it was such a long time ago. What was I, 19 or 20! I remember the orchestra was there. It was a huge band, and that's probably all I really cared about. If the applause was put in later, then it was beautifully done. It's extremely well done. It's funny, now that I'm talking with you I'm remembering things that I just couldn't remember. You know what, you're absolutely right, I had brought a change of clothes along but just did the show in the clothes I was wearing because I didn't need the dress. There was no audience. It's just that there was this big band and it seemed like an audience!

GVB: Sure, the John Scott Trotter orchestra, that was quite an ensemble!

PK: Oh my yes!

GVB: Bing typically recorded the rehearsal of the show, and then the final taping, so that if something went wrong during the final taping, a portion of the rehearsal show could be edited in. Do you recall if you ran through the show twice with Bing?

PK: No, we only did it one time. I absolutely know that. Because I had to leave to get to the Johnny Mercer TV show afterwards. So I know I was out of there early. Everybody said Bing did not like to rehearse. As a matter of fact someone that worked on a film with him told me he didn't like to rehearse for a film either. You had to arrive knowing exactly what you were doing.

GVB: Were you able to do your duet of "That's Amore" with Bing in one take?

PK: I think so, I think we just zapped it off in one take. Bing didn't like to do it more than once. His philosophy was if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right the first time. Someone else had told me that about Bing. And I'm pretty good about that anyhow.

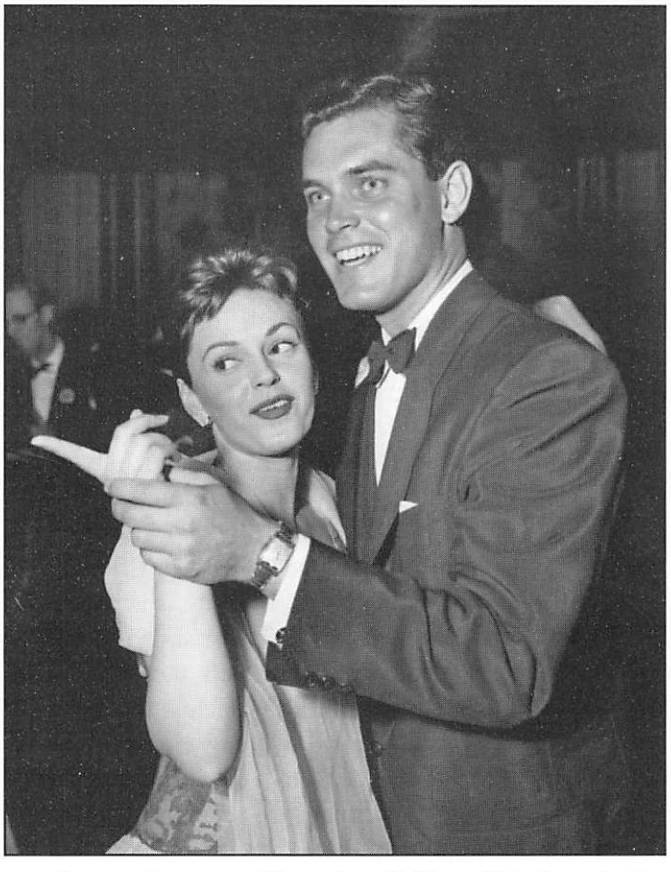
GVB: His nickname was 'one-take Crosby'

PK: Yeah, that's right. So I kind of knew it was one take or the hall when I went there. Look, I was only doing that Johnny Mercer TV show at the time, which wasn't on nationally, it was only a regional show, so to get a call to do the Bing Crosby show was a VERY big deal. I don't know, maybe Johnny recommended me to Bing? You know they were joined at the hip.

GVB: You also had the honor of performing the Oscar nominated song "Count Your Blessings" at the Academy Awards ceremony in 1955, the song that Bing introduced in the film *White Christmas*. Bing was nominated for Best Actor that year for his role in *The Country Girl*, and attended the ceremony that year.

PK: And you know who asked for me, don't you?

GVB: It can only be Bing!



Peggy dances with actor Jeffrey Hunter at the gala party at Romanoff's after the Oscar ceremonies.

PK: Yes it was. I have ALWAYS believed it was Bing who said "Why don't you get Peggy King?" I know he did, because they (the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences) would've taken a suggestion like that from Bing. Remember I had only been on the George Gobel Show a few months at that time. I had done a lot

of Columbia records by that time, but that was a great privilege for me. The fact that he asked me to sing a song that he had sung. They could've had ANY singer they wanted. I always think of that night because that was the first time I knew that I was becoming a star, because when I came in (on the red carpet), all the fans in the bleachers started yelling "Peggy! Peggy!".

GVB: Were you able to speak with him at all backstage or at an Oscar party?

PK: Yes I did. He was very friendly to me. Very friendly. And you know he had enormous influence with Mr. Berlin (composer of "Count Your Blessings"). I have a hunch that Bing did not want to take the trouble to sing that night, and who can blame him with everything else going on. I had just done a benefit with Bing prior to the Oscars.

GVB: Well that's very possible, because the Academy Awards were in March of 1955, and you mentioned in a previous conversation that you performed at Pebble Beach for the Crosby Clambake, which would've been in January, only two months prior.

PK: Yes, I sang for his forty best friends! It was inside, and I took a piano player with me. Boy, you just put it together for me! Bing introduced me by saying "I want you to hear a new girl coming along, and I want to tell you, this girl is a good singer." Coming from Bing Crosby, that's like getting an 'A' on every exam you ever took! It's like the icing on the cake, it was just marvelous. Bing was very good to me. If I had to remember the thing that I felt was the biggest honor of my career, it would be Bing's place in my career. He really had a lot to do with my career.

GVB: You became friends with John Scott Trotter, who, after Bing's weekly radio series ended in 1954, went on to work on the George Gobel TV series. What was he like to work with and to know?

PK: I will always believe that Bing and John Scott Trotter asked for me to be on the George Gobel TV series. I was doing the regional show (with Johnny Mercer) in the same studio that they were doing the nationally televised George Gobel show, so they were able to see me every day singing, five or six songs a day. Gary told me his Dad used to watch the show with Mercer. So it was just one of those magical things.

You run around trying to do things in your career where you think you'll be seen, or you'll meet this person or that person and then, by accident, you get to meet and work with the great Bing Crosby, and then he tells someone about me, and that person tells someone about me, so I owe a lot to Bing. I would meet other stars for the first time and they would say, "Oh, Bing Crosby told me about you!" Can you imagine how that made me feel! I thank him every day of my life. Everything I know about pop singing came from Bing Crosby and Judy Garland.

My big thing about Bing was that people just felt like they knew him. I wish I could explain it better than that. I mean people weren't afraid of him, they weren't afraid to go up to him, I saw people go up to him. All those years they heard him on the radio, and you get used to someone. I remember that meeting Bing I was very happy to meet him and excited, but I was also comfortable with Bing. He seemed like an old friend.

GVB: What was John Scott Trotter like to work with and to know?

PK: Oh, I always called him Uncle John, and I just couldn't believe that he was going to be doing arrangements for me! I knew that I was in the best hands in the world. Each week on the Gobel show, when we'd get there for the script read-through on Tuesday, Uncle John would say, "Bing called me, he really liked the song you did on the show!" I still feel the excitement today when I think of it.

GVB: You also became very close friends with Bing's oldest son Gary Crosby, who, it is well known, had a somewhat rocky relationship with his father.

Peggy and Gary

PK: I went out with Gary a lot. And I LOVED Gary. He was a wonderful guy. He came to see me at the Mocambo Club, and my folks were visiting me, and someone took them back to my apartment ahead of me. They were in the guest room, which was next to the living room. When I finished my second show, Gary and I went back to my apartment to sit around for a while. Gary and I were on the couch, which was right where the head of the bed was in the other room where my parents were sleeping. Gary and I were talking and laughing, and my Dad woke my Mother and said, "Margaret, I think Peggy has Bing Crosby in the living room!" They didn't come out of the bedroom, but in the morning, my Mother asked me about it. Thinking back on it, I

should've told them it WAS Bing!

Gary and I were very close friends, and Gary was very interested in furthering this relationship. Gary would liked to have married me, but he was two or three years younger than I, and I'm one of those women who likes a man to be older. I wouldn't have been comfortable with a husband younger than I. Also, Gary was not a happy person. Has anyone else told you that?

GVB: Yes, that was well known, and well documented in his book "Going My Own Way". There were some things in that book that really damaged Bing's reputation as a father.

PK: Oh no, I didn't know that. What got into Gary? Alcohol?

GVB: That was probably a big factor, yes. And perhaps motivated by a publisher looking to make a fast buck.

PK: I know the one thing I mentioned previously about Christmas, when Gary was out too late the night before or something and had to call me and say my Dad isn't having anyone for Christmas this year. So Bing just cancelled Christmas. And Bing could do that! He just cancelled Christmas dinner. Not only couldn't I visit Gary, but he couldn't leave the house either. That was that.

Didn't Bing remarry? What was her name?

GVB: Yes, he married actress Kathryn Grant in 1957.

PK: Kathryn Grant, yes I did something with her, I can't remember what it was, but I met her once. Wasn't she around my age?

GVB: She was born in 1933.

PK: Yeah, she's in my age group. Boy, I guess I should've taken up with Bing and not Gary! I'm sure she made him a wonderful wife, though. Gary and I had moved on by that time. After Bing remarried, I don't think I had another conversation with Gary. In 1957, I was out on the road doing plays and things, and didn't see Gary anymore, but I know he had a very serious drinking problem. And that makes me sad. I loved Gary dearly. I never had a better, truer, kinder male friend than Gary Crosby.

GVB: Well that's good to hear. A lot of people have a lot of bitterness towards Gary, having never met him, just based on the awful things written in his book.

PK: You know, now I think someone told me what was in that book years ago and I decided I didn't want to read it. I didn't want to hear Gary talking that way about Bing. I couldn't handle that. You know, maybe Bing had a stern upbringing. My father was exactly like Bing. That's probably why Bing didn't scare me. Boy, I was a well behaved kid around my Dad. I remember Gary asking me... he loved my folks when he met them... he said "Is your Dad strict with you?" And I said, are you kidding? No one got more spankings than I did. My Dad raised me with an iron hand. And Gary didn't say anything, but he gave me one of those looks, that Gary grin, and I knew perfectly well what was going on in his mind. I just think Bing didn't want them to be Hollywood brats. Someone told me that Gary was very crushed by the difference in treatment (between Gary and his brothers and Bing's children with Kathryn). I was so grateful that I came from a non-show business family. There's an awful lot of jealousy between people in the same family who are in show business.

GVB: Did you work with Gary professionally as well?

PK: Yes I did. I did the radio show (the 1954 'Gary Crosby Show', which was a summer replacement for Bing's show), and we also did something on the road together, like a nightclub act on the same bill or something. No, I did work with Gary as well. Gary was a hard worker. He didn't fool around when he worked. I wonder if Bing knew that. And I think Gary was a REAL good singer. Oh, Gary was a very, very good singer.

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It was a genuine pleasure speaking with Peggy King, and once again I must express my gratitude to Anthony DiFlorio III for making it all possible. Peggy calls Bing "by far the most influential pop singer of the 20th century. Who else influenced as many singers as Bing Crosby?" She also agrees with me that there was no finer singer of duets than Bing. He truly could harmonize with anyone! For more information on Peggy and her career, please visit her website at www.PeggyKing.org. Also, be sure to check out her own monthly radio series, "Off The Cuff with Peggy King", heard online at www.wyyr.com.

Greg Van Beek

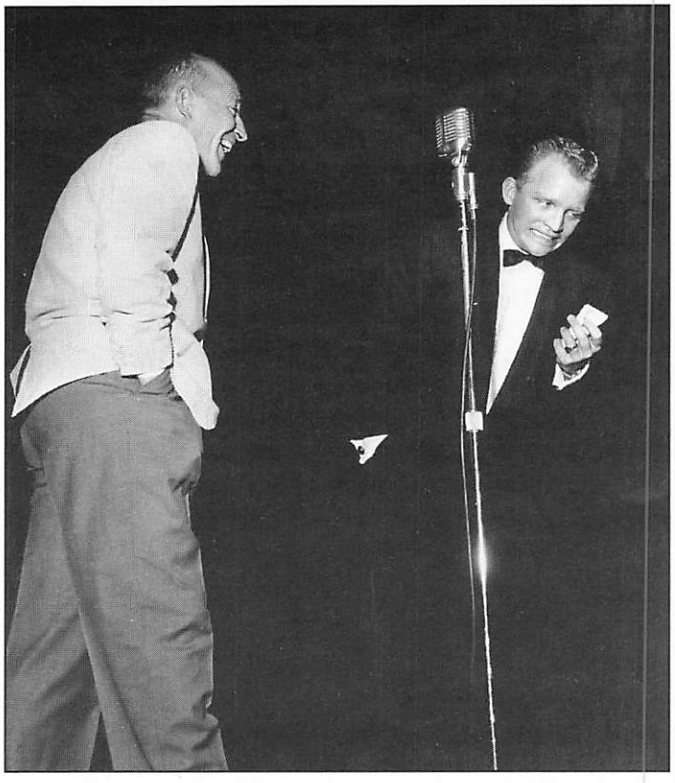
(Editor: Greg mentioned Jana Mason. Jana was a Decca recording artist who had recently scored a success on tv's "Donald O'Connor Show," when she appeared with Bing. She was also having screen tests at MGM that same month. She went on to have a steady career in TV and supper clubs. Born Ursula Comandatore, she married Freddie Wacker in 1958. They had three children and she converted to Christianity and in 1978 was seen giving a concert at the First Presbyterian Church in Warsaw, New York.

As we know only too well, Bing certainly had his work cut out trying to cope with Gary but he remained supportive of his eldest son throughout as can be seen from the next article.)

Bing at the Flamingo, Las Vegas

An item on eBay in March included the photograph over the page.

The accompanying text put on the back by the news agency in 1960 read as follows:



Bing gets into the act to help his son Gary.

For years, casino owners have offered Bing Crosby as much as $50,000 a week to play in Las Vegas – and for years Bing declined. In line with the attitude taken by Bob Hope and Perry Como, he did not want to get mixed up with the Las Vegas gambling mob.

Last month however, for the first time in his long show-business career, Bing appeared on a Las Vegas stage after all. He had heard that his oldest son Gary was in trouble. Having broken away from his three younger brothers, Gary was booked into the Las Vegas "Flamingo" as a single. On opening night, his singing act was torn into pieces by the critics. They termed it "over-long and over-arranged". Next night, Gary suffered a bad case of stage fright. It was at this point that Bing heard of his son's distress. He flew from his fishing ranch in Rising River, California, to give the boy a hand. After that, Gary was fine.

In the past, Gary and Bing did not get on together all too well. Now, the hatchets are buried.

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Gary was co-starring with comedian Joe E. Lewis and the review of the opening show on July 21 in *Variety* read as follows:

> First-niters caught him with a case of jitters and the act is overlong, but with proper editing, Crosby should have a smooth nitery turn which will be potent at the boxoffice. Throughout the turn, Gary tosses in hip patter which embellishes the well-paced festivities.
> (*Variety*, July 25, 1960)

Bobby Darin deputised for Gary on July 22. Bing flew into Vegas on July 29 to see Gary's show. Carolyn Schneider was there too and she records the event in her book.

> That night Gary had gone through his regular routine of mimicking his father when he took the microphone, and introduced him by saying, "there's a man in the audience who taught me all of this." It caught the Flamingo showroom crowd completely by surprise.
>
> Bing rose from his seat and walked toward the front of the room. After climbing a few steps, he strolled onto the stage. He stood next to Gary, sharing the one and only microphone, and appeared more casual than usual. Without his toupee that evening, few people sitting near him in the audience recognized the crooner until he was under the spotlights. Although it was the peak of the summer heat in Las Vegas, back in the 1960s the better restaurants and showrooms had a dress code that required men to wear a jacket. Even someone as well-known as Bing would not have been admitted if he arrived in one of his famous Hawaiian shirts. Thanks to air conditioning, Gary's dad looked very sharp indeed wearing a linen sport coat and tan trousers.
>
> The two men started off with some light-hearted banter and a bit of clowning around. Assuming that was to be the end of it, Uncle Bing started to exit the stage, not wanting to steal Gary's big moment. Besides, Bing had never worked a Vegas nightclub crowd before and wasn't at all sure what to expect and he had made some noise about not wanting to perform in Las Vegas when he was interviewed some time before.
>
> So now he was caught in the crosshairs, feeling a bit unsure of the situation, when Gary tugged on his arm and asked him to "stick around." Bing stood there with his hands in his pockets, looking like someone who had just been pulled out of the audience by a magician to take part in a knife-throwing act. But the old master quickly recovered and joined Gary in a duet of their popular recording, "A Simple Melody."
>
> Bing was in good sprits and the father-son team did some additional ad-libbing on stage; the people loved it. "I'm glad to see you're finally working," Bing said to his oldest son. It was a packed house for the dinner show that night, and even Uncle Bing's pal Phil Harris was sitting ringside.
> (Carolyn Schneider, *Bing: On the Road to Elko*, Page 23)

Despite Bing's efforts, the Flamingo management did not exercise their option for a fourth week from Gary and he ended his run a week early. A press release said that Gary had a heart condition and was unable to continue but this was done "as a friendly gesture to Gary Crosby so that his professional status would not be impaired." Andy Williams took his place.

On September 6 that same year, Gary married Barbara Stuart, a dancer he had met at the Flamingo. Bing and Kathryn were at the Olympic Games in Rome at the time. On his return, Bing arranged for Gary to record for his Project Records company and on December 19 at Chasen's Restaurant, Bing met Gary and his new wife for the first time since Gary's marriage.

When Bing met Tiny Tim

Maureen Solomon emails from Toluca Lake in California.

Just found this info on when Bing met Tiny Tim and I wonder if you know about it.

I met Tiny Tim before he was famous, playing at a Club as opening act for 'The Blues Project' at *The Scene* in Manhattan. I loved him! He was so different. But no one was listening. A few days later I was at a New Year's Eve party on Park Avenue and he was there, standing against the wall, all alone. So I went up to him and said, "You're Tiny Tim, aren't you?" And he said yes and I told him I had seen him at the club....he was very happy about that, because he was feeling outcast and I recognized him. He was very quiet and polite and we had a nice talk.....this was in the early 1960s.

What follows is an extract from an interview with one of the country's foremost experts on Mr. Tiny Tim, Justin Martell, conducted by the *Amoeblog* and published on January 11 last year.

****

Q: Do you have any idea what some of the people Tiny admired, like Rudy Vallee or Bing Crosby, thought of Tiny's interpretations of early 20th century songs?

A: I do, in fact, have a pretty good idea of what these people thought of Tiny Tim. When Tiny hit the big-time, Rudy Vallee invited Tiny to visit him at his home and later sent him a telegram when he opened at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas in August of 1968 wishing Tiny a "happy and successful engagement" and referring to him as a "very fine and real person." As 1968 drew to a close, Vallee was in full support of the idea becoming Tiny Tim's opening act for a series of shows. Though Tiny also liked the idea, his management team allegedly squashed the idea, as they were nervous about Vallee's sometimes abrasive behavior. According to Tiny, Vallee was very much put off by this and made several negative comments to the press with regard to both Tiny's talent and his 1969 marriage to Miss Vicki on the *Tonight Show*. Nevertheless, the two appeared together on the *Joe Franklin Show* in 1977 and, also according to Tiny, Vallee was visibly moved when Tiny performed, in Vallee's own style, a song he had made famous years prior called "I'm Still Caring."

As for Crosby, the opportunity for Tiny to meet this idol of his came when he was invited to perform on the television program the *Hollywood Palace*. Tiny had said he would do the show with either Elvis Presley or Crosby. Ultimately, Crosby was selected and the episode was taped in late 1968 and aired in early January of 1969.

"We're very proud to have here a young fella who represents one of the most phenomenal success stories in show business," Crosby told the crowd as he introduced Tiny. "For the first time on the *Hollywood Palace*, the man who made tulips the national flower...Tiny Tim!" When Tiny took to the stage and performed a few songs from the then-recently released *Tiny Tim's Second Album*, "Come to the Ball," My Dreams Are Getting Better All the Time," and "Great Balls of Fire," he received a lively reaction from a clearly amused live audience. "Verrrry interesting," said Crosby as he approached Tiny, inciting laughter from the audience. "You have quite a style there. I don't know how to characterize it. Well, it's spirited!"

Tiny Tim with Bing on the *Hollywood Palace*

What followed was later described by Tiny one of the best moments in show business. Though not devoid of humorous moments, such as Crosby addressing Tiny as "TT" and Tiny, despite Crosby's insistence, refusing to call him Bing, but rather, "Mr. Bing," it was made clear in the segment that Crosby genuinely appreciated what Tiny had to offer as an entertainer. Playing on Tiny's encyclopedic knowledge of vintage music, Crosby quizzed Tiny by singing songs from films he had starred in and then asked Tiny to name the film and then sing another song from the same movie. Tiny, true to form, nailed all of Crosby's trivia questions and the segment closed with Tiny, Crosby, and, oddly, Bobbie Gentry singing a rendition of "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening."

Maureen Solomon

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series of CDs remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $18.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $18.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £11 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has a supply of the book "Alternate Bing Crosby" by Colin Pugh which was published in 1988. Running to 159 pages, it gives details of the many alternate takes Bing made. If you would like a copy, send £3.50 to Michael Crampton. Europe and Ireland members should send £4.50. There are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances and Michael is offering these at the hugely discounted price of only £5.99 including postage. Also Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal figure.

Mike Kaptanis, 64 Kingsley Drive, Yonkers, NY 10710, USA (Tel: [914]-779-9728, email: mmgkaptan@aol.com)

"Can offer to Bing Crosby collectors of 16" transcriptions the following original *Philco Radio Time* radio shows dated from April 1947 thru Feb. 1949. These are by no means every show Bing recorded between those two years. There are 10 discs."

Contact Mike for further info.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619 [Tues/Wed & Fridays: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. only],
email: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Free lists available by email. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs, please contact Ray.

Dorothy Thomas, Leicester, UK. (Tel: 0116 283 1733)

Dorothy is the widow of the late Gordon Thomas who was an ICC member for many years. She would now like to sell Gordon's collection. Those interested should contact her by telephone. She has 67 albums, five box sets, 17 78's and various tapes plus one book.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for CDs imported from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: abcsoc@dodo.com)

The Society has been running for 35 years having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights. In April, *Here Comes the Groom* was shown supported by the TV show *Sergeant Bilko Presents Bing Crosby.* The June film night featured *Mississippi* and *Here Come the Waves.* Further film nights are scheduled for 20 August, 15 October and 3 December. The venue has changed this year and is now in the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows, recordings and clips from Bing's films. The site has some superb material on it, particularly in the video and audio archives, and it is well worth devoting some time to it.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and there is also a discussion facility. Over 65000 people have "liked" the site which is very pleasing indeed.

YouTube

Bing Crosby Enterprises has its own channel at YouTube with many Bing videos in evidence. Go to:

http://www.youtube.com/user/BingCrosbyEnterprise

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material and Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography" and Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" can be accessed. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Maintained by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want

to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so.

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

Tony Meade's blog

Tony has an interesting and varied site at http://bingsphotos.blogspot.co.uk/

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698) website: www.intuneinternational.com)

Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent monthly periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Nat King Cole International Fan Club, c/o Roy Holmes, 18 Rutland Drive, Morden, Surrey SM4 5QH, UK (phone: 020-8648-8858, website: www.highstreets.co.uk/kcc/index.shtml)

King Cole Comments is the club's newsletter and this is issued three times each year. For a free copy, please send a SAE to Roy Holmes.

Friends of Doris Day, c/o Dr. Sue G kg r, 71 East Avenue, Oxford OX4 1XR, UK. email: suegokgor@aol.com.

Started in 1997, The Friends of Doris Day is an international Doris Day appreciation club based in Oxford, UK - and the only Doris Day fan club in the UK. The club publishes three 32 page magazines a year, packed full of articles and information you won't find anywhere else, including memorabilia signed by Doris herself for auction or sale.

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Justin Clarke, 21 Main Rd., Wetley Rocks, Stoke-On-Trent, ST9 0BH, UK (phone: 01782 551103 – website: www.nicolalockett.force9.co.uk/index.htm).

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (email: JWWehrman@aol.com - website: www.jolson.org)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: www.flias.com/)

A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771).

A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world. Ken Barnes, who made those great albums with Bing in the 70s, is the Honorary President.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418).

Meetings take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Tara Towers Hotel, Dublin 4.

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, c/o Penny Probert, 15, Bessels Way, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 2QG, UK (email: pat_woor@yahoo.co.uk - website: http://www.iawas.co.uk/)

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £8.50 (UK), 10 Euros (Europe) and $20 (USA). A quarterly newsletter of 12-14 pages is issued.

Books 'n' Bing

1. Perfect Harmony by Richard Grudens, Celebrity Profiles Publishing, 2012, softcover, 327 pages, $29.95, ISBN: 978-0-9847878-1-4.

This is the 15th book by Mr. Grudens following on from his earlier publications about various artists and bands, including Bing. This time he looks at groups of singers from the Rhythm Boys, the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots up to The Beatles and The Temptations. Written in an easy conversational style, Richard has also brought in other contributors such as Professor Grudzinski of Berklee College of Music (who explains and defines harmony) and Frankie Dee of GMMY Radio. Richard himself provides pen pictures of over 70 singing groups and Bing crops up in plenty of places. An in-depth look at the Andrews Sisters does of course mention Bing and Patty Andrews herself has written the foreword to the book. Packed with photographs, the lyrics of many songs are included and everything combines to make the book a very useful reference source. The book can be ordered from Celebrity Profiles Publishing, Box 344, Stonybrook, New York 11790 (phone: [631] 862-8555, email: celebpro4@aol.com)

2. My Life With Groucho: A Son's Eye View by Arthur Marx, published by Robson Books Ltd, June 1991, 288 pages, ISBN-10: 0860514943, ISBN-13: 978-0860514947

Pat Shields writes:

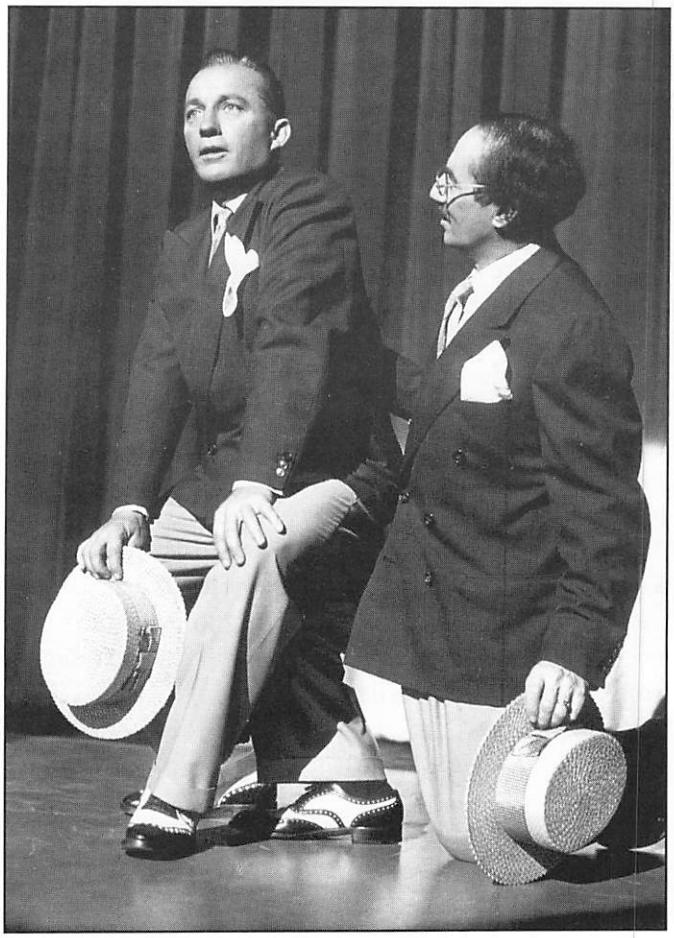
"I found an anecdote that *may* be of interest. It's from the book, "My Life With Groucho" by his son, Arthur Marx. From page 125:"

"He (Groucho) is also very fond of Bing Crosby, but they never see each other, except when they are thrown together professionally. Father likes Bing because he sings such good harmony, and what's more, enjoys doing it, even when he's not getting paid for it. The first thing they do, whenever circumstances throw them together, is organize a little quartet group.

One of Groucho's favorite stories about Bing

concerns the time they were on a War Bond tour together. They were in Milwaukee, eating dinner one night at a German Hofbrau-type restaurant. Jerry Colonna was also at their table, and they needed an alto to complete the quartet. "I'll find one", volunteered Crosby, and according to Groucho, he went to every table in the place, looking for someone who could sing alto. But everyone turned him down, and finally he returned to the table alone, and very disappointed.

"There's no big-punch finish to the story", said Groucho, "but I don't think I'll ever forget that scene. There was probably the highest priced singer in the world — one of the most famous personalities of all times — going through some dumpy joint in Milwaukee pleading with people to sing harmony with us, and getting turned down. They didn't recognize him. They thought he was some screwball."



With Groucho in "Mr. Music"

Memo from Martin

Martin McQuade always has his eyes open for Crosby mentions and he gives us details of recent discoveries.

A Call from the Stars

In 1960 Bing Crosby received a telephone request from actress Marsha Hunt to participate in an hour-long film which she was producing for the United States Committee for Refugees. Ms. Hunt had become acquainted with Bing when she was a starlet at Paramount (she was strongly considered for the female lead in *Rhythm on The Range*).

Bing proudly shows his horse "Khayyam" to Marsha Hunt (right) and Eleanore Whitney in 1936.

Bing impressed the actress with his immediate, no-strings agreement to appear on camera to raise awareness and solicit donations during "the year of the refugee." Bing appeared along with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, David Niven, Burl Ives, Harry Belafonte, Jean Simmons, Louis Jourdan, Steve Allen, Robert Ryan, Spring Byington, Jeff Chandler, and Richard Boone. Ms. Hunt recalled that Bing's appeal was by far the most heartfelt of the lot. A fiftieth anniversary screening of a restored print of the film, called *A Call from the Stars*, was held on February 18, 2010 at the Hollywood Heritage Museum with Marsha Hunt in attendance. A documentary film, *Marsha Hunt: Sweet Adversity*, is currently being prepared by Zelda Can Dance productions.

The Shroud of Bing?

The Shroud of Turin, the possible burial cloth of Jesus Christ, has aroused endless controversy. Outlandishly, Bing has been stirred into the mix. *Sacre Bleu*! A paper by paranormal investigator Joe Nickel entitled "The Turin Shroud: Fake? Fact? Photograph?," which was published in the November, 1979 issue of *Popular Photography*, does just that. First Nickel discusses the forensic history of this relic, pointing out that it first

appeared in the mid-1350's, was almost destroyed in a fire in 1532, and was finally photographed in 1898. When this occurred, the positive image of a man developed. Theories were advanced on how it was possible that the negative on the cloth was created and how it was impossible for the shroud to be a fake.

The Shroud of Turin.

Mr. Nickel attempts to invalidate these claims by asserting that the photographs were actually reproductions from books and that the blood stains resulted from mere paint. His zeal to discredit this linchpin of Christian faith goes to quite an inordinate length. Employing 14th century technology, in conformity with biblical information, Mr. Nickel boasts that he had reproduced the same results. He explains how you can do this yourself at home. First you make a set of chemicals simulating the balm used on corpses at the time of Christ. Then apply the balm to an ashtray with a bas-relief of Bing Crosby on the bottom. By placing a linen cloth in close contact with the face in the ashtray - *presto chango* - the "Shroud of Bing" will appear with a remarkable life-like representation when viewed as a photographic negative. Image analysis should yield that this has all the properties which the original shroud possesses. This experiment seemed beyond incredible until a distant memory came back of an episode (to be specific, Season #4, Episode #79) of *In Search of Ancient Mysteries,* hosted by Leonard Nimoy. As witnessed on *You Tube*, this mystical manifestation of Bing must be seen to be believed.

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An addendum should be made to my review in BING #160 of *Robert Redford: The Biography,* which referenced Bing Crosby Production's failed entreaties that the actor star in the 1963-64 series, *The Breaking Point*. Redford did make a guest appearance in the fourth episode, *Bird and Snake*, broadcast on October 7, 1963.

Martin McQuade

Association of Recorded Sound Collections

The Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and study of sound recordings, in all genres of music and speech, in all formats, and from all periods. ARSC is unique in bringing together private individuals and institutional professionals—everyone with a serious interest in recorded sound. This prestigious organization gives awards annually and the book about Perry Como by Ken Crossland and your Editor received an award for the Best Research (History) in Popular or Rock Music in 2010.

The tremendous work by John McNicholas and subsequently Richard Tay of Sepia Records on the Chronological Crosby series seemed to me to be worthy of consideration for an award and I arranged for Richard Tay to submit the first nine of his "Through the Years" CDs to the ARSC. This has had mixed results because the reviewer in the ARSC journal was clearly impressed with Sepia's output but was not enamoured by Bing's work in the 1950s. However, we are not scared of criticism of our man and here's the review for you to read. Let us know what you think! Richard Tay is sending the reviewer volume 10 too.

Bing Crosby: Through the Years, Volumes One - Nine (1954-56)

Sepia Record 1111, 1122, 1129, 1139, 1146, 1158, 1167, 1178 &1185 (www.sepiarecords.com).

Few voices in the recorded annals of American popular music are as instantly recognizable as that of Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby (1903-1977). It is a voice that is an indelible and singular sound in the aural history of the U.S. in the twentieth century, the result of an unparalleled career spanning more than fifty years. During that time, Crosby handily conquered all old and new entertainment forms with the exception of Broadway (although he did appear in concert on Broadway near the end of his life). On movie screens, radio in its heyday, television from its inception, and, most particularly, in recordings, Crosby introduced - or made his own - much of the canon of American popular music from the 1920s to the 1970s. His golden period

and, arguably, the era of his finest work and greatest influence, were the years between his emergence in the mid-1920s as one of Paul Whiteman's "Rhythm Boys" and the end of World War II. Only an Al Jolson, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, Tony Bennett, or Ella Fitzgerald could claim a similar level of accomplishment as a singer in the pre-rock'n'roll twentieth century - and only Jolson or Sinatra were as broadly influential.

Crosby made nearly 100 movies, including one that won him a Best Actor Academy Award in 1944 *(Going My Way),* and he appeared on countless radio and television shows. Most impressive is the fact that he recorded over 2,000 released commercial vocals, apart from numerous radio, television, and concert recordings. He scored 42 "number one" hits and his recording of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas," introduced in the 1942 film *Holiday Inn,* sold in excess of 100 million copies, setting a titanic record that still stands. Crosby's career was unique during his aforementioned golden era and among his peers, and his choices of musical material uncannily reflected the national mood in the middle of the twentieth century.

After World War II, Crosby increasingly, and too often, recorded inferior material and inane novelty songs, and adapted his once vital "crooning" style to the more "relaxed" manner typical in the postwar era. This approach, sad to note, was the equivalent of a vocal lobotomy - his voice continued to echo that familiar sound American audience knew so well, but in this period he truly earned his nickname, "The Groaner." The vitality, humor, and emotional depth so persuasive in his earlier vocalizing, was significantly diminished, even though the clarity of his lyrical interpretations remained impressive. Recurrences of his vocal vigor occurred when he turned to an earlier standard or when he performed on radio or television with a singer whose vocalizing he respected and undoubtedly felt challenged by (Jolson, Garland, Peggy Lee, Rosemary Clooney, etc.), but the deadness of much of Crosby's later singing paralleled a slow but precipitous decline in his leading position among American singers. It must be stressed that this decline was less to do with changing musical styles after World War II than with his own alteration of his personal style, although public affection for Crosby remained strong until his death. Revelations of his alleged abuse of his children – and the continuing evolution of American popular music – has further undermined his legacy in recent decades.

In what must be seen as a contribution to restoring Crosby's predominance, Sepia Records has released a series of nine (thus far) single-disc Crosby releases collecting vocals (many for the first time in the CD format) from 1950-1956, the aforementioned period of decline in Crosby's style. Sadly, it generally does not enhance his reputation. Sepia's *Bing Crosby: Through the Years* series is inherently disappointing, despite the label's typically elegant re-mastering and packaging. Archivally speaking, Crosby's work in any era deserves preservation and commercial release in the most accessible and best possible ways, but only the most die-hard Crosby fan will find consistent pleasure among the tracks on these discs.

The many tracks featured come from numerous LP sources, some inspired by Crosby films of the era *(The Country Girl, White Christmas)* and, in the case of the most pleasurable discs (Volumes Six, Seven, and Eight), from *Bing Crosby - A Musical Autobiography* (recorded for Decca in 1954), on which he narrates and revisits his 1930s evergreens including "Learn to Croon," "I Surrender, Dear," "Temptation," "Love Thy Neighbor," "Love in Bloom," "June in January," "It's Easy to Remember," etc. The performances included of these oft-performed Crosby numbers are low-key and generally lacking the vitality of the original essential renditions. Those who prefer Crosby at his most relaxed will undoubtedly appreciate these variations, but to hear the nearly catatonic renditions of early classics - "Please," for example - will drive some listeners to their CD shelves for the original performances.

Jane Wyman and Bing in *Here Comes The Groom*.

The nine discs include both Crosby solos and duets with screen co-stars, including Bob Hope, featured here in songs from their co-starring film, *The Road to Bali,* as well as Jane Wyman (and their delightful, infectious "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" from *Here Comes the Groom),* Donald O'Connor, Louis Armstrong, and Danny Kaye, as well as entertaining tracks with The Andrews Sisters, Peggy Lee, Crosby's eldest son, Gary, and the extraordinary and often overlooked Connee

Boswell (happily, Sepia has released *Singing the Blues with Connee Boswell* [Sepia 1077] which helps fill the void).

Many Crosby solo tracks featured here are "covers" of hit songs that emerged from those years, including hits scored by other singers, Broadway standards (from *Guys and Dolls, The King and I, Can-Can, Paint Your Wagon, Wonderful Town, Call Me Madam),* and Hollywood tunes (the title songs from *Autumn Leaves* and *Young at Heart,* "Secret Love" from *Calamity Jane,* "The Isle of Innisfree" from *The Quiet Man).* Volume Five offers several novelty tracks in French, including a dullish rendition of the classic "La Vie En Rose," and most of the discs are sprinkled with selected latter-day renditions of Crosby standards, including "Pennies from Heaven," "You Are Too Beautiful," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams," "Please," and the inevitable "Where the Blue of the Night" and "White Christmas" (in the latter accompanied by that film's co-star, Danny Kaye, with Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens filling in for the film's co-stars, Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen). The discs also include a healthy sampling of vintage (1910s-1930s) popular music standards, all given the laid-back Crosby treatment, and a range of holiday songs, a permanent Crosby specialty following the runaway success of "White Christmas."

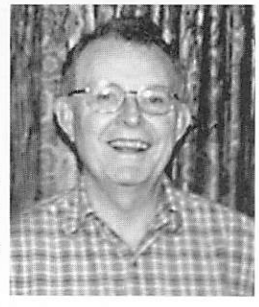
Not to overstate the point, but beyond noting that these tracks are not Crosby's finest work, he was, even at this low point, an estimable vocalist and there is some evidence to support this in the best of the tracks across the nine discs. And Sepia Records is surely not to blame; in fact, Sepia has made it an admirable mission to release the rarest recordings of major artists from the 1920s to the 1960s, and to present these recordings with excellent sound quality, thorough historical information, and appealing packaging. Sepia is to be lauded for creating an enviable catalogue of valuable recordings, most of which are in the CD format for the first time, including Broadway cast albums *(Simply Heavenly, Inside U.S.A., Seventeen High Button Shoes, Two's Company, Make a Wish, Hazel Flagg, Song of Norway, Roberta, Porgy and Bess, Carmen Jones, This is the Army, Texas Li'l Darlin,' Call Me Mister),* studio casts recreating Broadway musicals *(Show Boat, Rose Marie, Music in the Air, Kiss Me Kate),* radio and television casts of musicals *(White Horse Inn, Pinocchio, Hans Brinker, Lady in the Dark),* London cast albums of American musicals *(The Music Man, Aladdin, Do Re Mi, Irma La Douce, Once Upon a Mattress, The Most Happy Fella, The Pajama Game, Can-Can, Wish You Were Here, Paint Your Wagon, The King and* I), London cast albums of British musicals *(Bittersweet, Follow That Girl, Make Me an Offer, Free as Air, Grab Me a Gondola, Summer Song, Salad Days, The Water Gipsies, The Buccaneer, After the Ball, The Boyfriend, Wedding in Paris, Love From Judy),* and film soundtracks (3 *Sailors and a Girl)* ignored by major labels, and collections of a remarkably diverse group of popular singers and entertainers from across the twentieth century. For example, discs are devoted to such vintage figures as Al Jolson, Sophie Tucker, Irene Dunne, Josephine Baker, Fred Astaire, Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald, Deanna Durbin, Kate Smith, Ethel Merman, Mae West, Connee Boswell, Kay Thompson, and Ethel Waters, as well as post-1940s vocalists including Pat Boone, Margaret Whiting, The McGuire Sisters, Mary Martin, Vera Lynn, Jane Morgan, Mel Torme, Vivian Blaine, Julie Andrews, Patti Page, Tony Martin, Martha Raye, Tex Beneke, Hildegarde, Johnny Mercer, Dinah Shore, Betty Hutton, Tony Bennett, Dick Haymes, Vic Damone, The Andrews Sisters, Lisa Kirk, Dolores Gray, Rosemary Clooney, and Doris Day, among many others (Sepia's complete catalogue can be found on their web site). In most cases, these releases enhance the reputation of the performer - or present their work for the first time in the Compact Disc format.

In short, Sepia is steadily amassing a catalogue of unique and, in some cases, previously obscure recordings and, as such, is preserving an essential recorded sound archive. Inevitably, some rare material while fulfilling a "completist" mission will fail to enhance a legendary artist's image. These Crosby discs certainly support Sepia's mission and, for Crosby fans, release of these lesser-known vocals will be applauded. Others may find that these recordings do not add much brightness to the enduring star it means to celebrate.

James Fisher

(Editor: Well, we certainly did applaud the release of these songs and as Mr. Fisher says, Bing was still "an estimable vocalist" during the period. Members reactions will be welcome!)

Celluloid Crosby



My last "Celluloid Crosby" article concerned itself with 1955. That was a year of change in the world of entertainment. Films and popular music had to respond to a new generation whose tastes were at odds with the show-business formulas which had prevailed over the last couple of decades. 1955 saw Bing preparing to respond to new audience demands. But from the point of view of Bing on screen there had been an earlier significant year which saw a clearly discernable change. That year was 1938.

Robert Bookbinder in his book "The Films of Bing Crosby" pinpointed the film as well as the year in which the change occurred. He wrote:

By 1938, Crosby had established himself as one of the most popular and durable light leading men in motion pictures. His musicals and light comedies had all been enormously successful at the box office, and his status as one of the screen's most likable personalities was generally acknowledged. But whether Crosby could successfully handle a serious dramatic role had yet to be resolved. For this reason, Sing You Sinners rates as extremely important in Crosby's film career. .. It was the very film to offer Crosby a screen role of pith and substance, in which he could demonstrate his ability as a dramatic actor.

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Bookbinder's assessment is supported by fans and most critics alike.

It would seem that the "new" Bing was a collaborative affair between the script writer, the director and the man himself. Claude Binyon devised the plot of *Sing You Sinners* and went on to write the screenplay. He knew Bing quiet well. They were near neighbours in Toluca Lake.

They spent time together at Del Mar. Binyon conferred with director Charles Ruggles. He provided a rough outline of a plot about three brothers who hated singing but found it an economic necessity. He wanted to fashion Bing's dialogue based on his observations of Crosby at home and at the race track. Columnist Sidney Skolsky reported that Bing liked the idea and said, "I'm neither loud nor soft about acting, but I guess I can act myself.' Creating dialogue with which Bing was comfortable had worked well two years earlier when Carroll Carroll put words into Bing's mouth for his *Kraft Music Hall* radio show. Binyon's natural sounding dialogue worked equally well on film.

Fred Reynolds in his book "The Road to Hollywood" summed up Bing's performance in *Sing You Sinners* with the observation, "it gave him his first real chance to show his natural acting talent in a story with more dramatic content than those with which he had previously been provided."

Fred echoed the majority of the critical reviews printed in the autumn of 1938 when the film was released in the USA. Here's a sample:

Homespun, down to earth, and as natural as eggs for breakfast - *Variety*

The best of the Bing Crosby pictures. If ... *Sing You Sinners* earns no other distinction, it will be the first screen portrait of Bing Crosby as he really is, "the most informal, easy-going man in the world" - *Los Angeles Examiner*

Fred MacMurray gets firm with his younger brother in the film, watched by Ellen Drew.

The improvement shown by Crosby in his acting is nothing less than phenomenal - *Hollywood Citizen News*

There was mild dissention, however. James Francis Crow (also of the *Hollywood Citizen News*) called it "a curious rambling affair". But then he went on to say, "It is the type of picture which should bring down any house." He meant picture house, of course, but the feedback provided to the Motion Picture Herald by A. E. Eliasen, a Minnesota exhibitor contradicted this. "We played this hot, advertised it by mail and radio and took in enough to pay for the film rental and advertising expense. The picture seemed to please but we couldn't get them in. To me, *Sing You Sinners* was ruined by the scene showing Crosby intoxicated ...I do know that about 75 per cent lose interest in any star who has had the misfortune to be so cast...Any feature we have played with any such scene has taken a tremendous drop after the first day." It seems that Mr. E. was anxious to use his personal beliefs to measure the film's reception.

Sing You Sinners provides an opportunity to study the way in which the casting and promotion of films during Hollywood's golden age generated good copy for newspapers. The dailies were always willing to print publicity supplied by the film studios. After all, those studios were also heavy spenders when it came to advertising their wares in the press.

As is often the case, the casting of a Crosby picture contained as much drama and hype as the finished product. For *Sing You Sinners* Don Ameche was the studio's first choice for the part of David Beebe, the eldest of the three Beebe brothers. Ameche was contracted to 20th Century-Fox and Paramount deferred their agreement to use Ameche and instead use one of their contract performers. Fred MacMurray was then ideally cast as the level headed, breadwinning eldest Beebe brother. Bing played irresponsible brother Joe with the youngest brother, schoolboy Mike, still to be cast. Paramount's wanted Mickey Rooney for Mike. Rooney was under contract to M-G-M and was becoming a valuable studio property. Rooney's studio saw no advantage in loaning him to a rival studio. The part remained unfilled until first assistant director on *Sing You Sinners,* Arthur Jacobson, had a chance encounter. Despite M-G-M's refusal on Rooney, Jacobson attended that studio's annual party at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. He was impressed with one of the acts appearing that night: "The O'Connor Family". He felt the twelve year old Donald was perfect casting as Mike Beebe. A one year contract between O'Connor and Paramount at $250 per week resulted. This amount was inflated to $300 when it was syndicated in the appropriately named "Film Flam" column.

The publicity surrounding the casting of MacMurray's fianc e, Martha Randall, made good reading fodder for the fan magazines. Ellen Drew was the "newcomer" cast in the role. Paramount's publicity machine drip fed the L.A. press about their acting find. The photograph in the *Los Angeles Daily News* was captioned, "Two more newcomers, Donald O'Connor and Erin [sic] Drew, are launched on screen careers ... Miss Drew was discovered working in a Hollywood candy shop". When *Sing You Sinners* was previewed by *Hollywood Citizen News* reporter James Francis Crow he referred to her as a comely young newcomer. In Arthur Jacobson's memoir he states that he suggested her for the part of Martha Randall to director Wesley Ruggles. Ruggles provisionally okayed her as long as Bing approved. Or is that what readers were encouraged to believe?

The reality differs somewhat from Paramount's publicity. Bing must have known Ellen Drew. She had a small part in *Rhythm on the Range,* released two years before *Sing You Sinners* went into production. She was no stranger to the Paramount backlot. Indeed, she appeared in over twenty films before she made *SYS.* She was billed as Terry Ray - her real name - in those. Her rise to prominence had a familiar ring to it. A barber's daughter, she was a salesgirl and elevator operator before winning a local beauty contest. Maybe she did work in a candy shop when she decided to try her luck in Hollywood, but she was under contract to Paramount at $75 a week when she was cast as Fred MacMurray's fianc e in *Sing You Sinners.*

Less than three months after filming was completed the film received its first showing on August 5th at the Del Mar racetrack. Location shooting had taken place there. Presumably Paramount had no difficulty in negotiating permission to shoot there as Bing was a part owner of the racetrack. The film was first shown in New York on the 17th of that month when it premiered at the Paramount Theatre. Promoted by the studio as being about "the god-darndest family in the whole U.S.A", it went on nationwide release at the beginning of September and by mid-October it was playing the smaller towns. One eagled eyed viewer was C.W. McHale of Lawrence, Massachusetts. He wrote, "In the excellent rendition of the 'Small Fry' number...Bing Crosby is seen taking at least two drinks from his glass of beer. Yet at the fadeout of the number his glass of beer is miraculously filled almost to the brim." Maybe A. E. Eliasen of Minnesota would see this as evidence of the film's continuity girl's intoxication.

By now Bing was sure fire at the box-office. When the Savoy Cinema in South Shields, Tyneside, opened on 12 December, 1938, they booked *Sing You Sinners* as the opening attraction. The cinema building boom in the UK was still going strong and it was essential for any new theatre to open with a major audience puller.

In the context of the films Bing had been turning out in the rnid-1930s, *Sing You Sinners* brought a more serious Crosby to the screen. It would take until the 1950s for him to flex his real acting muscles with *Little Boy Lost* (1953), *The Country Girl* (1954) and *Man on Fire* (1957). The price we had to pay for such solemn fare was the absence of songs we could leave the cinema

whistling. The likes of "The Magic Window" and "The Search Is Through" from the first two of that trio of dramas are no substitute for *SYS's* "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams" and "Small Fry".

Keith Parkinson

Robert Minch - I Say: Ba ba ba boom

Robert Minch of the *Red Bluff Daily News* had this to say in his column on May 25.

J. Giessner checks in with a follow up to last week's quiz wherein I asked for the middle names of Bing Crosby.

She writes, "Interesting that you mentioned Bing Crosby (Harry Lillis Crosby) today in your column. I had just watched Dina Eastwood on *The View* this morning talk about her new Reality TV Show and it stirred memories when Bing owned the Rising River Ranch in Cassel*, and now Clint Eastwood has had it for several years.

Our family has owned the ranch "next door" for a 100 years now, and as a teenager, I rode some of the Crosby quarter horses and used to get the Welsh ponies ready for the young Crosby kids to ride.

I was once referred to by Harry as his favorite babysitter. I know Harry was named for his father and grandfather, but I'm not sure his middle name. I called him Harry Deluxe Crosby as items such as Lazy Boy Chairs, Jeeps, and other deluxe items used to arrive at the ranch for Bing as gifts and advertisement.

Once, young Harry was telling me about something just arriving and I said "Well, isn't that Deluxe" pronouncing the "lux" and Harry said "My Dad would say "Deluxe" as "loux" so I said, "Ok. Harry Delouxe Crosby" and that was our thing for several years.

As for Bing, I called him "Mr. Crosby." Once when I was dropped off to babysit, he was sitting on the house steps and humming his "ba, ba, ba boom" sound. He was very pleasant and smiled with those beautiful blue eyes. Only once was he not so nice, and had to come back and apologize to my Grandmother.

He'd lost his black lab and was driving around looking for it. He backed his big Rolls Royce car into Grandma Eva's gate and dented the gate quite noticeably. I'm not sure what happened to his car. He did apologize later to "Grandma," as he called her too, and had the gate fixed.

As to Clint Eastwood, he flies his own helicopter to places to play golf. He also flies it to the ranch and keeps it in a hanger there."

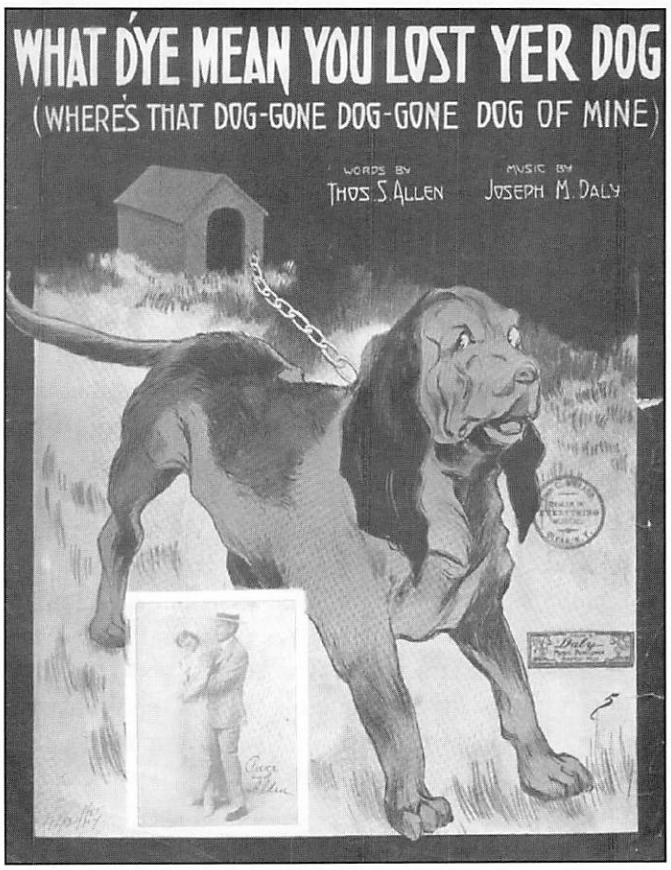
*Cassel, for those who have not been up in that neck of the woods, is between Burney and Fall River Mills though to the south. It is about 3,000 feet or so above sea level and evidently a pleasant place for people in the limelight to get away from it all. In reply I mentioned to Jo that Bing and Phil (Harris) stopped by our plant occasionally to buy a leg of lamb. I waited on them but could never think of anything clever to say.

Robert Minch

"I've Got a Dog Named Rover"

Members will recall how Bing sang this little ditty at the opening of his 1977 Palladium show. He had sung it on the *Flip Wilson Show* in 1972 and UK viewers saw him sing it on the *Parkinson* show the same year. On each occasion he described it as being one of the first songs he ever sang in public at the Parish Hall of St. Aloysius Church in Spokane.

Robert Bader's excellent 2-CD set "So Rare: Treasures from the Crosby Archive" gave your Editor the first clue about the correct title of the song which is "What D'ye Mean You Lost Yer Dog? (where's that dog-gone, dog-gone dog of mine)". The writers were Joseph M. Daly and Thos. S. Allen, a busy songwriting partnership whose songs are largely forgotten nowadays. Bing's a capella version was used in his 1955 radio show and was included on the CD.



The song was published in 1913 and was recorded by Sophie Tucker and by the Peerless Quartet the same year. The rendering on a 78 by the Peerless Quartet can be heard on the National Jukebox at:

http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/3549/

There is even a version on cylinder by Edward Meeker on YouTube! Bing did not use the lyrics in full when he sang it and in fact he adapted them in an

amusing way. For those who may be interested, the published lyrics were:

"I've got a dog named Rover
Here Rover come Rover,
He roams around all over
Just home three times a day,
I'll bet he hears me whistling
See the neighbors are list'ning,
"What do you mean you lost your dog?"
I hear the people say
Has anybody here seen Rover?
I'm looking for him now all over.
He's a hunter's dog all right
He keeps me hunting day and night,
This is what I worry over,
Say, who put the "Rov" in Rover?
My whistle's getting dry
It seems as if I hear that mongrel whine,
Woof, woof, woof! Woof!
I should worry like a tree and have somebody trimming me
Where's that dog-gone, dog-gone dog of mine.
I'm looking 'round all over, Here Rover come Rover,
I got him up in Dover
A hundred miles away,
Wait till he comes
I'll chain him, I'll train him, I'll brain him,
"What do you mean you lost your dog?"
Again I hear them say
Has anybody here seen Rover?
I'm looking for him now all over.
He's a hunter's dog all right
He keeps me hunting day and night,
This is what I worry over,
Say, who put the "Rov" in Rover?
My whistle's getting dry
It seems as if I hear that mongrel whine,
Woof, woof, woof! Woof!
I should worry like a hen
And scratch all day without a pen
Where's that dog-gone, dog-gone dog of mine."

Twin sisters who appeared on '50s TV found dead; survivors sought

This was the rather sad headline to a report in the *Los Angeles Times* on March 6 and there was a Bing connection as you will read.

In their early lives, Patricia and Joan Miller were entertainers who appeared on TV and did live shows, singing and dancing while their mother played piano. But in their last decades the twin sisters became recluses, isolated in their home in South Lake Tahoe, sheriff's officials said. It's likely they were dead for several weeks before their bodies were found late last month. And now, detectives are struggling to find a family member to notify about the deaths.

Volunteers doing a welfare check arrived at the Millers' home Feb. 25 but their knocks were unanswered, said El Dorado County Sheriff's Det. Matt Harwood. Deputies later entered the home and found the sisters' bodies, one in her bedroom, the other in a hallway just outside. The cause of death has not been determined but foul play has been ruled out. They were 73 years old.

Since then, detectives have combed through pictures and documents trying to find a relative to notify. **They found a photo of the twins as young girls sitting on Bing Crosby's lap and another of the pair in tap shoes.**

Detectives learned that they appeared regularly on a weekly television show, "The Hoffman Hayride," in the 1950s and that they entertained troops at several military bases. But they've found almost nothing about the twins' family. The sisters always listed each other as next of kin, Harwood said. Detectives believe their parents died some time ago.

This undated photo provided by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department shows twin sisters Patricia and Joan Miller. It is unknown which sister is which.

There are rumors of a brother who lives in the Bay Area and of extended family in Portland, Ore., where the twins were born, but detectives have yet to confirm it, Harwood said. They've come to believe that neither sister ever married and that they were dependent on each other their entire lives.

"I think they need to have some family know that they're gone," Harwood said. "I think they deserve that."

NBC News added:

The sisters, by all accounts, weren't eccentric. They were born in Portland, Ore., and moved to San Francisco before their entertainment career took off for a while. Eventually they settled into regular jobs, with Joan Miller as a senior accounting clerk in the payroll department at the Lake Tahoe Unified School District for five years until 1984 and Patricia Miller working for El Dorado County's social services office during the same time period.

Those who saw them around town say they were truly inseparable and knew of nobody else in their lives. They weren't likely to stay on the phone and didn't chat with the neighbors.

The sisters listed each other as their next of kin, Harwood said. "All they had was each other, and that's actually the way they wanted it."

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A number of our members drew your Editor's attention to the article and it struck a chord with me. In Bing's 1953 memoir *Call Me Lucky*, (Chapter 14, page 288 in my copy), he writes:

> ...I wasn't braced for Pants' call, but when my omnipresent twin-girl fans arrived at my Elko front door I was not surprised. They're likely to pop up anywhere. I've gone to Washington, D.C. to play a golf match and have looked up to see them in the gallery. I've visited Chicago to make a personal appearance and they're there. They live somewhere in New York State, but they get around.
>
> They must be twenty-two or twenty-three years old by now, but when I first noticed them they were about sixteen. For the first two years of their twin-fans-trailing-crooner routine, they peeked around the corners of buildings at me, and when I saw them, they giggled and ran. As the years rolled by, they came a little closer. One day I grabbed them and bought them a sandwich at a restaurant. They were nicely dressed, well-mannered, pleasant. They're through college now, but I still hear from them from time to time.
>
> One day I was sitting on the front porch at the ranch and I happened to look up. Trudging down the road they came. They'd hitch-hiked from Elko, sixty miles away. There's no bus service from Elko out to my place. I brought tea and sandwiches out to them, and we had a chat. I offered to drive them back to Elko, but they said that would spoil their adventure, and when they'd had their tea, they went down to the main road and hitched a ride into Elko. From there I suppose they got on a train and went back to New York.

****

The press reported that the twins were 73 when they died, which would mean they were born in 1938 or 1939 so the ages don't quite match with Bing's description but were they the same twins described in *Call Me Lucky*? We'll probably never know.

Incidentally, there was a follow-up in the papers a day or two later.

"... Emails and phone calls poured in and, assisted by amateur genealogists who read media accounts of the sisters' deaths, investigators were able to trace the cousins yesterday. The cousins said they had not heard from the sisters in years.

Detective Matt Harwood, of the El Dorado County sheriff's office: 'They confirmed pretty much what everyone else told me. They were pretty reclusive and no one really knows why.'

Detective Harwood said the cousins, who do not share the sisters' surname, had told him they lost touch with the women as other family members died.

In one case, an amateur genealogist had called one of the cousins to confirm their blood line before giving the name to Detective Harwood.

Harwood said the sisters deserved to have their family know about their death, and he was pleased to complete that mission with help from 'people from across the country, just your Average Joe wanting to try their hand on genealogy.'

He added: 'There's no way we could have done it without you guys in the press and literally hundreds of people just calling to help put the pieces together.'

One of the second cousins lives in the San Francisco Bay area, and the two other cousins live in Portland, Oregon, where the twins grew up. Harwood said he had yet to find a will but planned to give some of the twins' personal items, including their mother's furniture and family photo albums, to the cousins."

BING AND THE 'SOAPS'

UK readers in particular will remember warmly the many articles the late Lionel Pairpoint wrote for BING magazine and one we first published in April 1990 deals with a a little known facet of Bing's radio career. It's a pleasure to write "here's Lionel" again.

I just got a radio for my birthday. It is about the same size as an average credit card but twice as thick. A far cry from the wireless apparatus of my youth which occupied more space than today's microwaves, with massive slab-like batteries, glass accumulators requiring constant re-charging and an aerial which almost cost my father his life when rigging it between the chimneys.

The tuning dial boasted many mysterious names, Hilversum and Droitwich, Huizen and Zeesen, Stuttgart and Schenectady but all we could get, with any clarity, were the National and Regional programmes and Radio Luxembourg. I have only recently discovered where

Schenectady is and I can't help thinking that if Dad had only managed to stretch that aerial another three feet, I might have actually heard, first hand, some of the programmes that I intend to write about!

The relatively simple concept of the radio series eluded the BBC for many years but the American networks, with the consistent need to satisfy sponsors, were shrewd enough to realise the benefits to be obtained from 'hooking' listeners on a weekly, 'same time, same spot on the dial' format.

Among the most popular of these series were the radio playhouses. These 'theatres of the air' tended to specialise in potted versions of major films, featuring, wherever possible, the actual stars, re-enacting their movie roles. If the original stars were not available, due to contractual commitments, other big names from Hollywood were used.

This led to some curiosities in casting. Judy Garland can be heard, pre-empting her part in the first re-make of *A Star is Born* by some ten years. Robert Cummings substituting for James Stewart in 'You Can't Take It With You' or later, Charlton Heston for Marlon Brando in 'Viva Zapata' and horrifying, no doubt, for today's purists, Alan Ladd and Hedy Lamarr starring in 'Casablanca'!

Although I feel certain that there may be other examples that have yet to see the light of day, let us look at the few specimens of Bing Crosby's participation in this medium, available on record or tape. It is not proposed to indulge in lengthy synopses of the plots, on the assumption that most readers will be familiar with the films concerned. Sources are shewn, in brackets, after the titles.

Within the literal meaning of the word, plus a little licence, it could be said that Bing's first effort, for these 'dramatic digests', was in a 'soap'! The Lux Radio Theatre of The Air was a 60 minute show which ran from 1935 to 1955, on CBS and not surprisingly, was sponsored by Lux Soap. The programmes were hosted by Cecil B. De Mille until 1945 when this duty was assumed by William Keighley.

A great deal has been said and written regarding Bing's gift for ad-libbing and improvisation but the most obvious attribute that a successful radio personality should possess is, sometimes, overlooked. This is the apparently simple ability to 'read a line' which does not necessarily equate with either a beautiful speaking voice or brilliant acting. Anyone who has dabbled in amateur dramatics will recognise the talent for reading the printed words and making them sound as if they had I just occurred to the speaker. We know this is one aspect of broadcasting at which Bing became particularly adept, the occasional 'fluff' often being turned to some advantage.

Having said this, he does sound rather ill at ease in **'She Loves Me Not'** (Totem 1004), - broadcast on 8th November 1937. In fact, the whole cast seems slightly under-rehearsed with Joan Blondell, Nan Grey, Sterling Holloway and William Frawley filling the parts played by Miriam Hopkins, Kitty Carlisle, Edward Nugent and Lynne Overman, in the movie. In common with all of these adaptations, the screenplay has been mutilated to some extent, in order to fit the time slot of some 40 minutes remaining for the action after lengthy introductions and advertising breaks. Bing sings the three songs introduced in the film but somehow, without the same assurance and verve familiar to us in the commercial issues.

He is his usual fluent self, however, on 15th January 1940, in **'Sing You Sinners'** (Spokane 8) which, dramatically, is one of the best of these productions. Claude Binyon's screenplay is closely adhered to and Bing slips back, easily, into the happy-go-lucky character of Joe Beebe whose butterfly brain vacillates between showbiz, swap shops and racehorses. Elizabeth Patterson retains her part as 'Mrs. Beebe' and one can comfortably accept the presence of Ralph Bellamy and Charles Peck in the roles played by Fred MacMurray and Donald O'Connor as 'Joe's' brothers. Bing sings, 'I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams', 'Don't Let That Moon Get Away' and uniquely, a solo version of the film's biggest hit, 'Small Fry'. Apparently, another Lux Theatre production of this same movie was broadcast in 1945, co-starring James Dunn and Joan Caulfield with Bing but I have not had the opportunity of hearing this item.

It was a surprise to discover that 'Jeff Peters' and 'Orville (Turkey) Jackson' were cousins. This blood relationship only becomes clear in the transfer from film to radio of **'Road to Morocco'** (taped copies – April 5, 1943). Bing and Bob Hope perform their famous duet of the title tune, with minor amendments to the lyrics. There is some disappointment at the omission of 'Ain't Got a Dime to My Name' but 'Moonlight Becomes You'

gets the treatment and Ginny Simms, standing in for Dorothy Lamour, pitches in with 'Constantly'. Some of the 'sight' gags in the film require some extra explanatory dialogue for the uninitiated but the overall effect is pleasing enough.

Dorothy Lamour was available to repeat her role in **'Dixie'** (taped copies), on 20th December 1943 although Barry Sullivan sounds somewhat laconic and humourless in the part of 'Mr. Bones', played on the screen by Billy De Wolfe. This is one of the most musically satisfying of Bing's appearances on the Lux Radio Theatre when he sings, 'Sunday, Monday or Always' (and reprise), 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot', 'She's from Missouri', 'A Horse That Knows the Way Back Home', 'If You Please' and the title song, 'Dixie.

The last of Bing's appearances, to hand, in the series, is **'The Emperor Waltz'** (taped copies), aired on 26th September 1949, with Ann Blyth in the part created by Joan Fontaine. He happily re-enacts his role as the itinerant gramophone salesman and opens proceedings with 'Get Yourself a Phonograph' which was deleted from the original sound track. This was the only song composed by Jimmy Van Heusen for the film and its rarity helps persuade one to excuse Johnny Burke's lyrical artifice, 'Let the needle - Help you wheedle - A kiss'! Bing also warbles a couple of choruses of 'The Friendly Mountains' which, not unexpectedly, loses some of the bravura of the celluloid performance. 'I Kiss Your Hand, Madame' is handled with the customary aplomb and there are duets of 'The Kiss in Your Eyes' and 'The Emperor Waltz' with Ann Blyth. The mating of the music and the radio adaptation works well and there are some competent performances from the (uncredited) supporting players.

The Screen Actors' Guild was a union founded in 1933 and the majority of Hollywood's performers were members. Several radio series including the words 'Screen Guild' in their titles and programme announcements indicate that the stars provided their services, without payment. In return the sponsors made a charitable donation, notably, to the Motion Picture Relief Fund.

One such series which also presented radio versions of motion pictures was 'The Screen Guild Players', sometimes known, I believe, as 'The Screen Guild Theatre'. The programmes began on CBS in 1938, as 30 minute shows but somewhere along the way to the early Fifties, its affiliations appear to have been transferred to the ABC network and the running time was doubled. The series enjoyed various sponsors and a miscellany of hosts.

Whilst appreciating the difficulties involved in tailoring a screenplay to fit an hour long programme, the problem of squeezing a 100 minute film into less than 25 minutes would seem to be insurmountable but to be fair, Bing's appearance in the series, on 11th January 1943, is only announced as 'Musical Highlights' from **'Holiday Inn'** (Spokane 15 & Sandy Hook SH2049). The programme was sponsored by Lady Esther ('Four Purpose Face Cream'). The few brief 'dramatic scenes' serve, mainly, to introduce the songs and Bing, as 'Jim Hardy', narrates the bare bones of the story with assistance from Truman Bradley, the host/announcer. One could scarcely expect the whole score to be crammed into the time permitted but there are duets with Dinah Shore (as 'Linda Mason'), of 'White Christmas' (and reprise), 'Happy Holiday', 'Abraham' and 'Easter Parade' together with a solo version, by Bing, of 'Be Careful It's My Heart'.

Bing recaps his role as the unconventional 'Father O'Malley' in **'The Bells of St. Mary's'** (Spokane 15 & Sandy Hook SH2049), on 16th October 1947, with Ingrid Bergman and Joan Carroll in their original roles. The programme was sponsored by Camel Cigarettes ('More doctors smoke Camel's than any other cigarette'!). The proceedings were hosted by Jean Hersholt, at that time, President of the Motion Picture Relief Fund and the dramatic content is given more emphasis than the music, restricting Bing's vocal contributions to 'Aren't You Glad You're You' and a brief version of 'The Bells of St. Mary's'.

Bing and Mona Freeman on the "Welcome Stranger" show.

On 14th October 1948, another half-hour show was sponsored by Camel Cigarettes. **'Welcome Stranger'** (taped copies) featured Barry Fitzgerald, re-creating his role as 'Dr. McCrory' and Mona Freeman (a young actress whose name, it may be remembered, was romantically linked with Bing's, after the death of his first wife) has the part of 'Trudy Mason', originally played by Joan Caulfield. As in the previous programme, the acting takes preference and Bing only has time to sing, 'My Heart Is a Hobo', (which due to the axing of some scenes from the screenplay, moves its position in the plot) and 'As Long As I'm Dreaming'. It may be recalled that, in the film, the source of the 'epidemic'

which strikes down the schoolchildren was traced by the dauntless physicians to clandestine cigarette smoking. Predictably, in the radio version, in deference to the sponsor, the cause is identified as little green apples!

'Birth of the Blues' (Spokane 9), sponsored by Buick Cars is a joy for the connoisseur. This was an hour show on ABC, with Dinah Shore as 'Betty Lou' and Phil Harris in the role of 'Memphis' played in the movie by Brian Donlevy. The main points of the screenplay by Harry Tugend and Walter DeLeon are still evident and there is an abundance of music, including some songs not featured in the film. The interpretation of his part, by Phil Harris, raises some spontaneous chuckles from Bing and an opportunity is found for the wise-cracking front man to deliver his theme song, 'That's What I Like About the South'. Bing gives solo performances of 'Basin Street Blues', 'Ida, Sweet As Apple Cider', 'My Melancholy Baby' (with guitar accompaniment only), 'Way Down Yonder in New Orleans' and 'St. Louis Blues'. He duets with Dinah Shore in 'Birth of the Blues', 'Wait Till the Sun Shines Nellie' and 'The Waiter, The Porter and The Upstairs Maid' (with additional help from Phil Harris). Dinah Shore has several solos, including, 'Memphis Blues', 'The Dixieland Band' and 'Ballin' the Jack'. For good measure Red Nichols provides accompaniment and the programme closes with all three stars reprising 'Birth of the Blues'. There is some discord regarding the date of this programme. The sleeve of Spokane 9 shows, 'January 1950' whereas 'Radio Sound Tracks -A Reference Guide' by Michael R. Pitts, gives the date as 25th January 1952. I do not think that I shall be sticking my neck out too far, to declare the true date to be 18th January 1951. There seems to be ample aural evidence, within the show, to support this –'The world premier of the new 1951 Buick, just two days from now, on 20th January and there is also a reference to the celebration of Bing's '20th Anniversary in Show Business' which was a feature of his Chesterfield series in January 1951.

The last two examples are from yet another series featuring sound adaptations of films. The Gulf Screen Guild Theatre, sponsored by Gulf Oil was a 30 minute program hosted by Roger Pryor which ran for about 10 years on CBS from 1939. I have been unable to connect the titles covering Bing's appearances to any feature film and must assume that they are both original productions. The first is a whimsical little nonsensity entitled, **'Mr. Jinx Goes to Sea'** (taped copies), broadcast on l0th December 1939 featuring Jean Parker, Andy Devine, Chick Chandler and Raymond Walburn. Bing plays 'Perry Entwhistle', a sailor burdened with an hereditary 'jinx' ('every time an Entwhistle sings, a calamity occurs') and like the Frog Prince, the 'jinx' cannot be lifted until a girl tells him that she loves him. Fortunately, the hoodoo does not prevent him from singing 'Are You Having Any Fun?', 'South of the Border' and 'Make with the Kisses', in addition to various parodied fragments of other songs.

'Altar Bound' (taped copies) was aired on 23rd February 1941 and co-starred Bob Hope and Betty Grable. Bing and Bob play, 'Ted' and 'Hank', a couple of 'losers', bearing some similarity to their 'Road' characters. Having thwarted Betty Grable's 'wedding', at the altar, the pair is inveigled into assisting in tracking down the lost bridegroom which involves a three-in-a-cabin, sea voyage. The 'stateroom farce' is well laced with 'gags' but hardly matches the announcer's description of 'hilarious' and the insubstantial plot is only relieved by Bing's rendition of a rare version of 'Frenesi'.

"OLD GROANER" Bing Crosby "gives" at air rehearsal with Betty Grable and Bob Hope. After Bob finishes *Nothing But the Truth* he'll star in screen version of Broadway musical *Louisiana Purchase*.

"Altar Bound" with Betty Grable.

In closing, may I say that my advanced years permit recollections of the Savoy Orpheans Dance Band and 'The Ovaltiney's' but unlike Mr. Springsteen, I was not

born in the USA. Therefore, let me repeat that I have no first hand acquaintance with the American broadcasting system and I welcome correction from anyone, with greater knowledge, who may disagree with anything that I have written herein.

Lionel Pairpoint

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Stan White, Rothwell, Northamptonshire, UK

David Currington in the spring BING speaks of "the superlative Pete Moore orchestra augmented Buddy Cole backed radio tracks" and I totally agree.

The above is rather different to the words of Gary Giddins in his notes for the Mosaic set where he tended to dismiss Pete Moore's effort as "overdubbed strings arranged by Pete Moore" followed by "yet they simply weren't necessary." I feel that Mr. Giddins is totally wrong because the whole thing involves full orchestra as well as strings.

One of my favourites is "I Can't Get Started" in which the famous trumpet player Kenny Baker gives the recording the flavour, but far from a copy, of the well known record of the song by Bunny Berigan.

Buddy Cole's stepson listened to the whole Buddy Cole – Pete Moore 3-CD set issued on the "Silver Eagle" label. He fully enjoyed and approved and called it "a labour of love". Clare Cole (Buddy's widow) also approved and thanked both Pete and Ken for all their work on the project, adding that Buddy, had he lived, would have no doubt given his full support.

On the subject of the Mosaic notes, it seems to be Martin McQuade who says that Buddy Cole appeared in the film *The Country Girl* – playing at the party towards the end. Not so, don't know who it is. Buddy did have an uncredited spot as a piano player in the Doris Day film *I'll See You in My Dreams* (1951) but not in *The Country Girl.*

Preston Neal Jones, by email from Hollywood, CA, USA

As I embark on my second year of membership and enjoying your magazine, I regret only that it took me so long to join. Herewith, a few odds and ends relating to various contents of the new Spring issue...

I note various references to two of my life-long favorite Crosby albums, *Songs I Wish I Had Sung the First Time Around* and *Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings*. Apparently they're not everyone's favorite(s). Even the liner notes of *Bing Crosby Through the Years Vol. 9* disparage the arrangements for *Songs I Wish...*, and in your pages they're referred to as old-fashioned. I myself have absolutely no objectivity about that album because when I was a child it was my very first exposure to Mr. Crosby's singing and I fell in love with it. So for me, as an adult, the arrangements are neither old-fashioned nor modern, they're simply timeless. I've yearned for years to be able to play this music again, so its appearance finally on CD is a dream come true for me. The tunes are all good, some of them great, and Bing sings them wonderfully, so I'm content. (I only wish Bing had included a song/tribute to Fred Astaire, but that was made up for some years later by Bing's liner note essay for Astaire's *Attitude Dancing*, along with Bing's vocal of "Change Partners" on the latter-day album he recorded with Fred.)

Apparently there is disagreement about the Bregman instrumentation on *Bing Swings* from Verve, but here again I have no problem with it. I discovered the LP when I was a college student, and I still never tire of playing it on CD. Again, the songs are fabulous, and Bing's renditions are full of life and what Kay Thompson called bizazz. Ditto Mr. Bregman and his band.

Thanks again for your wonderful periodical, and please keep up the great work.

(Editor: My negative comments on the orchestral backing of 'Songs I Wish I Had Sung' were very much my own personal opinions and I am pleased to have a contrary view. Incidentally, Preston is a well-known writer himself and wrote the book "Heaven & Hell to Play With (The Filming of Night of the Hunter)" amongst others.

The "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings" album was the subject of some discussion on the Crosby Fan World forum back in April. It was always the Bregman led backing that was the mild controvery and when the album first came out the review in the forerunner to BING magazine read as follows:

> "From HMV comes a much more up-to-date Bing, if you prefer him that way, "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings". I gave all the titles in the December issue, but HMV have made a lovely job of this one. My only grudge is that there seems to be far too much "Top" in the recording. The tendency is to give the brass section a harsh shrill note. Perhaps one day, I may have the excellent equipment that is on the market to counteract this failing with some recording engineers. In spite of this, it is still fine value for your money." (Bill Taylor, reviewing the LP for *Crosby Post* - February 1957)

Ken Barnes also expressed a view about the album in his book "The Crosby Years":

> "This popular album has been re-issued many times on various labels over the years. As an example of Crosby's art it is something of an enigma. On the one hand the choice of songs is impeccable - beautifully written standards like "They All Laughed," "The Song Is You," "Have You Met Miss Jones" and "September in the Rain" and Bing's singing, for the most part, is exemplary. But, on the other hand, it is very difficult to accept Buddy Bregman seriously as a reliable orchestral accompanist. His writing can be reasonably tasteful on tracks like "They All Laughed," "Mountain Greenery" and "The Blue Room", but his brass scoring is ham-fisted and bitterly distracting in "Cheek to Cheek" and "I've Got Five Dollars". And one wonders how Bing ever managed to stay on pitch in the middle of "Heat Wave" where Bregman has the orchestra playing suspect chords. Despite all these faults, it was refreshing at the time to hear Crosby with a modern-sounding orchestra and while this album is no match for Sinatra's "Songs for Swingin' Lovers" classic LP, it was a step - albeit a hesitant one - in the right direction.")

Ron Field, by email from Morton, Washington, USA

Reading my BING magazine. Re Tony Strong's comments about no good songs from *Say One For Me,* I'm afraid that I have to disagree. The song *The Secret of Christmas* is now my favourite Christmas song (in comparison to religious ones). It has terrific thoughtful words to it and especially the lines I use every year on my Christmas message:-

It's not the things you do at Christmas time,
But the Christmas things you do all year through.

Keith Parkinson, Eccleston, St. Helens, Lancashire, UK.

I can understand Michael's concerns about declining membership and increasing costs. Already this year the Dick Haymes Society has decided to call it a day and the Sinatra Music Society has cut costs by reducing the publication of its magazine "Perfectly Frank" from 6 to 4 issues per year. The Johnnie Ray Society's membership is down to around 60 which puts its future in jeopardy even though it continues to publish a decent quarterly magazine.

And then last week the post office announced major price rises for mail. If BING magazine continues to maintain its high standard and publication frequency then a subscription increase is inevitable. I doubt this would result in a reduced membership. Let's see how other readers have responded by the time Michael reviews finances at the end of this year.

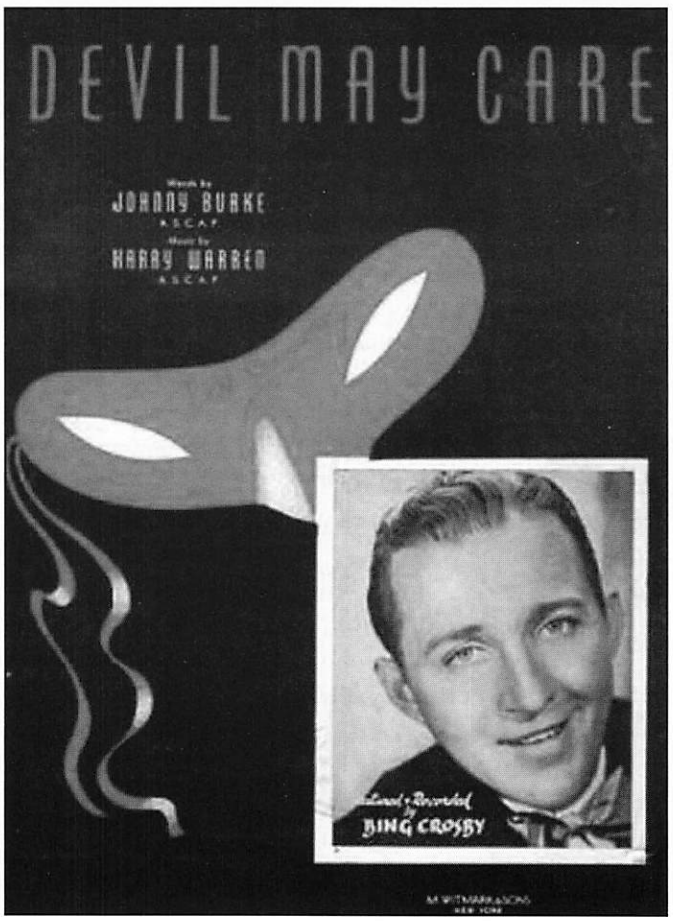
Martin McQuade is doing a great job in reviewing books containing Crosby references. I hope he takes a full tote bag to the beach this summer to help me decide which ones to buy.

(Editor: Apparently one of the Glenn Miller clubs has given up the issue of its magazine too. Probably a sign of the times as fans of artists from another era gradually fade away.)

Norman Wolfe, by email from Cumming, Georgia, USA

Congratulations on an excellent issue. The best in a while, I think. Wealth of good, thought provoking reading.

I always enjoy your regular contributors and am grateful they go to the trouble they obviously go to but it's refreshing to hear new voices such as Malcolm Sumner's account of how he became a fan and what period he preferred. (Mine is a little later - the hour long KMH era)



Some random observations-

I enjoyed the little article on the American sailor singing "Do You Care" during the attack on Pearl Harbor. That's always been one of my favorites too and I can still sing it in its entirety. (Not good but entirely). It is such a splendid example of that casual understated effectiveness only he could bring to a ballad in the late 30s. My friend, Vernon Taylor (God love him) and I used to bicker over that recording. He insisted Crosby sounded like Eddie Howard on it. I hope God has forgiven Vernon. I haven't. Another I have always liked in the same vein and from about the same period is called "Devil May Care". You never see it mentioned or included in a CD but it's beautifully sung and has a superb orchestration, a splendid example of what he could do in that era with an undistinguished pop tune.

Crosby's memoir of his most memorable Christmas is charming nostalgia. What boy doesn't have a sled in his memory? I wonder about the girl. Was she the one named Lemon that his brothers teased him about? Mine was named Sally and I recall to this day sharing my sled with her and going down a hill. I think I was about 10.

Loved Henry Pleasants' line "singing American." Indeed he did that as no one before or since.

Pat Murphy's article was so good and so was the briefer one quoting Jody Rosen. Their analysis of why history seems to have rolled Crosby under a rug was fascinating. That has to be one of the major mysteries in all of pop music and I am pleased to see some original thinking brought to bear on it.

Stan Awtrey's article on Furman Bisher getting Crosby to act as a reporter at the Masters was of particular interest to me. I knew Bisher for some 30 years. He was sports editor and columnist for the Atlanta Journal and later Journal-Constitution. He died about a month ago.

Lastly, I met Mozelle Seger while researching *Troubadour*. Mutual friends arranged for her to have lunch with me at the home of friends I was staying with in Hollywood. She brought my hostess what she called "a Crosby rose" and said it was one they cross-bred. Apparently that was a hobby. After lunch, we sat in the garden and talked and she told me, among many things, that they routinely paid medical bills for many of Bing's old pals including Harry Barris.

Well, didn't mean to ramble. You caught me on an effusive morning.

Alex Schicke, by email from Munich, Germany

First of all I want to congratulate you and the ICC team for a wonderful No. 160 issue of the latest BING magazine.

One of my favorite articles was about our member George O'Reilly. I wasn't familiar with all the stories, but being a Dean Martin fan from day one I enjoyed the funny episode about Dean's recording session. Yes, Dean was really the King of Cool.

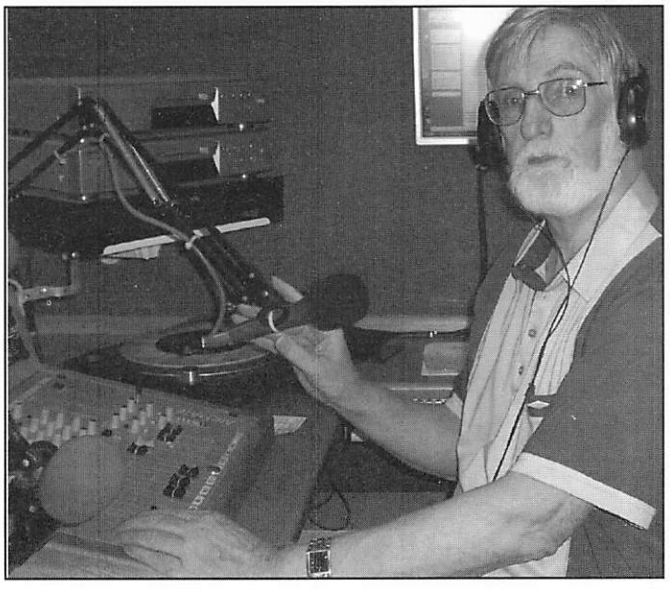
Keith Parkinson told us about Bing's film and recordings activities in 1955. Mr. Parkinson summed up Bing recording output quite well in his article. 1955 was a lukewarm year for Bing. He sang many novelty songs and he lost a clear direction. Sinatra und Cole started to record several concept albums, which became classics in the popular music field. Maybe Bing needed a strong record producer whose emphasis on was on creating classic albums rather than No.1 hits.

Another feature which I really like is Ken Crossland's CD reviews. Yes the 1956 "Songs I Wish I Had Sung" album for me is quite a mixed bag. Bing sang great, but the silly choir was really annoying for me, because a choir is not really necessary for those songs. The "Bing in Dixieland" album sounds great but I do not need the same songs twice.

Congratulations on the Sepia series! I am sure that it was a strenuous effort for the whole club. Maybe the ICC can make a similar series about Bing's radio records from the 1940s?

Perry Huntoon, by email from Naperville, IL, USA

...Volume 10 of the Sepia CD series of "Through The Years" leaves one with a bittersweet feeling. The ten Sepia volumes combined with the previous 51 Jonzo CDs mark a great achievement by making available the (almost) complete commercial recorded discography of the world's most popular singer of the mid 20th Century through the Decca years. I am grateful to the ICC and particularly you, Malcolm, and Wig Wiggins for seeing this project through. The final volume, however, is somewhat of a downer as the included album, "A Christmas Sing With Bing Around the World," hardly rises to the standards of Bing's previous holiday recordings and the alternate takes used to fill out the CD add little to the Crosby legend. The high point of the CD is Bing's rendition of "Gigi," which was previously missing from my collection. It is an outstanding performance and, in my opinion, surpasses Vic Damone's "definitive" version.

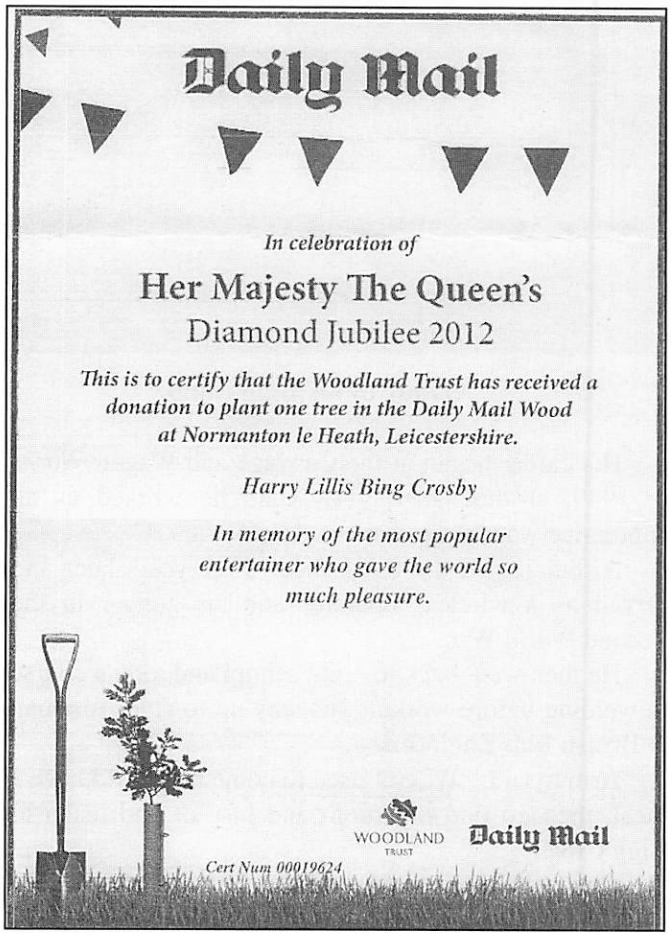


Jim Reilly presents his show for Angel Radio.

Ted Laker, Southsea, Hampshire, UK
Just thought you might be interested to know that ANGEL RADIO continues to play plenty of Bing records, whether they be on request shows, or on Jim Reilly's great Bing programmes, who incidentally hopes to do a special favourites selection on a Bing Crosby anniversary show. I've also been able to present several Crosby tributes – "Swinging with Bing" – "Crosby Classics from the 1930s" – plus a "Paul Whiteman and Musical Expression" feature. It would be great if the Crosby family knew of all this activity. As you may know Jim has worked hard on his Bing programmes for years, always informative, and sounding fresh. A bonus now is that they go out world wide on the Internet!
(Editor: Jim Reilly has been a stalwart Crosby supporter for many years via the ICC, Angel Radio and through ventures such as the "Memories" CDs, the CD listing books and many others. We owe him a tremendous debt and long may he continue with his Bing boosting efforts. Can't believe that it was 1979 when your Editor and Jim first met at the Leeds event!

Jim's programme goes out on Tuesday nights at 8 p.m. UK time and see www.angelradio.co.uk/ for further details.)

Ian B. Lawrence, Northfleet, Kent, UK
...Recently I collected a number of tokens from the *Daily Mail* and sent them in requesting a tree to be planted in memory of Bing. I have enclosed a photocopy of the certificate I received.


Daily Mail

In celebration of

Her Majesty The Queen's
Diamond Jubilee 2012

This is to certify that the Woodland Trust has received a donation to plant one tree in the Daily Mail Wood at Normanton le Heath, Leicestershire.

Harry Lillis Bing Crosby

In memory of the most popular entertainer who gave the world so much pleasure.

WOODLAND TRUST Daily Mail

Cert Num 00019624

(Editor: What a good idea by Ian! Incidentally, Ian is one of many members who makes sure his local radio stations play plenty of Bing by submitting requests on a regular basis.)

Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, NSW, Australia

I got a surprise on Tuesday morning (29th May) as our radio was tuned to the breakfast session on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's 702AM (from Sydney) when Bing's 1942 recording of 'White Christmas' was played, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the recording. Fancy that! It was said to be the biggest-selling recording of a Christmas song; could have made the bolder claim that it's the biggest-selling single of all time but I suppose one can't complain.

Colin Stewart, by email from Cambridge, UK
I wonder if you heard a rather unusual but welcome use of the Crosby voice on Radio 4 last Sunday, 24th June. The 9.00am programme, "Broadcasting House" had a piece on umbrellas in view of the big increase in sales because of the continuing rainy weather. The discussion with the head of Fulton's, the UK's major manufacturer, was on the various ways of carrying an umbrella, perhaps a la Gene Kelly, but the opening and close of the piece was Bing singing "A Fella with an Umbrella" with a good part of his closing chorus to end. Great stuff.

In a school end of term house party I did a rather silly act based on Desert Island Discs where I only had one record "Fella.." which I speeded up on the turntable of my wind-up to say it was Danny Kaye, slowed it down for Paul Robeson and smashed it (another record of course) when they didn't want to hear Bing! Such childish memories!

Arthur Blood, Derby, UK
First of all let me begin by thanking you for the piece you put in the spring issue of BING. It was nice to see this and having heard from Michael I was pleased that at least we did manage to enrol another member in the club as a result of the article in our local paper.

I have a friend who lives in Harrisonburg in Virginia. Her name is Helen Ley and when I was speaking to her on the telephone a few days ago I asked if she had ever met Bing. Her reply was that she had not, but she had spoken to him and went on to say that when she lived in New York, she read in the paper that Bing was going to be staying at the Waldorf Hotel for a couple of days before leaving for Europe to entertain the American servicemen serving in that particular war zone.

So on the day that he arrived at the hotel she was outside and watched him enter. About half an hour later she found a phone booth and called the hotel asking if she could speak to Bing Crosby. A voice asked her to wait a moment and after a few seconds a voice came on the line which was Bing's and said, "Hello can I help

you." She said her name was Helen Ley and she would like to speak to Mr Crosby. Bing replied, "I'm sorry he is not in the building." My friend replied, "Yes you are I saw you go in." Then Bing burst into laughter and asked what he could do for her to which she replied, "I have two brothers serving overseas and I just wanted to thank you for what you are doing and wish you good luck." He thanked her and she went on to tell me that he was quite jovial and friendly. I must say I enjoyed her telling me that little story Malcolm.

One of Bing's biggest fans, Arthur aims to keep crooner's memory alive

In our last issue, we mentioned Bing's hat which is now in the possession of Arthur Blood. We did not have room to include the accompanying article in the *Derby Telegraph* but can do so now.

WHEN people ask Arthur Blood which is his favourite Bing Crosby song, he will always reply: "It's the one I'm listening to now".

Because when he puts on a record, tape or CD of the famous artist's work, the 87-year-old feels like "everything is all right with the world".

Arthur first got hooked on Bing's music in 1942 after watching the film *Holiday Inn*, which featured the all-time-classic "White Christmas".

But what started as an interest became a lifelong passion as he set about collecting Crosby memorabilia.

And although his memories of Bing and a lifetime spent following him are so extensive, Arthur is not exactly sure when he first joined the International Crosby Circle.

The pensioner, of Osmaston Road, Derby, said: "Bing was born with a unique voice and, as soon as I saw the film and heard it, I just fell in love with it.

"It must have been after that when I became a member but I'm not exactly sure when it was – more years ago than I care to remember, anyway.

"But the most important thing to me now is to try to keep his memory alive.

"He had a fantastic career and, as his fans get older, I get worried this won't happen if we don't make the effort."

The American actor and musician was one of the best-selling recording artists of the 20th century. He enthralled audiences throughout his life, before his death from a heart attack on a golf course, aged 74, in 1977.

Arthur was originally a member of Britain's International Crosby Circle until it amalgamated with America's Club Crosby.

The group is now called the International Club Crosby and is celebrating its 75th anniversary. It has been recognised in the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest running fan club.

Arthur said: "The two clubs joined together a few years ago now because both were struggling for members. We now have about 900 across the world.

"It's a very friendly club and I've not met anyone in it who wasn't a true lady or gentleman. Because of it, I have friends in Ireland, America, Australia and all over."

The hundreds of Bing-related items and memorabilia Arthur has collected over the years are stored in his back bedroom, which he has turned into a shrine.

Among his prized possessions are the tie worn by Bing in the 1936 film *Anything Goes* and signed photographs and letters from the star.

The latest addition to the collection is a trilby hat which belonged to the singer – which he has vowed will never be sold – and, to keep his memorabilia up to date, he has a Blu-ray DVD of the 1954 film *White Christmas.*

The room itself is painted blue and many of the photographs, images and records are framed in gold, to acknowledge Crosby's song "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day".

Arthur said: "All the serious fans have a blue and gold room."

And it was in this room to which Arthur, a former page boy at Derby's Hippodrome Theatre, would retreat after coming home from work.

Arthur in his Bing room.

His career began at the Carriage and Wagon Works in 1939, at the age of 14, when he worked as an apprentice wagon repairer.

Arthur joined the RAF about three years later and served as a wireless operator and air gunner in the Second World War.

He then went back to night school and took a course in welding before working his way up to chief foreman at British Rail Engineering.

Arthur said: "When I used to come home, I'd have a meal, then go into my room and just sit and listen to Bing Crosby.

"It would only have to be for half-an-hour or so but, when you listen to him, you feel like everything is all

right with the world.

"I've just taken so much pleasure from his life."

Through the help of the fan club, Arthur had plenty of correspondence with Bing over the years but only saw him in person twice.

Both occasions were during concerts at the London Palladium, in 1976 and 1977, just before his death.

Arthur said: "The first time, I was sitting two rows from the front. They showed a film first and then the curtains went up. There was no big announcement.

"He then just strolled on from the wings like he just stepped off the set of *High Society*, which was the 1956 musical film he starred in.

"He was absolutely immaculate and I just sat there gobsmacked because I couldn't believe I was so close to the person who has always been my idol."

Arthur continues to promote Bing's work wherever he can but said it was getting more difficult as he got older.

He said: "The family have said that the fans have helped to keep Bing's memory alive and they once mentioned my name as someone doing that.

"I'm still in touch with them and I keep in contact with my friends across the world but I don't go to the annual meeting held by the ICC in Leeds any more."

Although Arthur said he considers Bing a man for all seasons, it was no surprise that the star is often referred to as Mr Christmas.

He said: "At that time of year, because of his Christmas radio shows and television specials, that is what he is always referred to.

"And I personally don't think that anyone sings at Christmas with the tenderness, the respect and the charm of Bing.

"No one in the world has done more to perpetuate the magic, the mystique, the reverence or the gaiety of Christmas."

Arthur lives with wife Vera, 84, and the couple have been married for 61 years.

He said: "She listens to Bing as well but it's fair to say she's not as enthusiastic about him as I am."

Arthur said he was starting to notice younger people joining the fan club but stressed his concern that Bing could one day be forgotten.

He said: "We are getting a few young members coming through and his family are also starting to do more, releasing DVDs and unseen radio programmes, so I am hopeful of the future.

"But when they asked the Crosby family why Bing isn't remembered like Frank Sinatra was, they said he was always a private person so they didn't issue CDs like Frank's family did.

"That's why we have to keep working hard to make sure his memory and legacy is perpetuated and he is not the forgotten man."

For more information about the International Club Crosby or to join, contact secretary and treasurer Michael Crampton on 0113 2689556.

Caroline Jones

Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley, and the Narratives of American Popular Song

Greg Van Beek contrasted the careers of Bing and Elvis in an earlier issue and this theme was picked up by Ben Ewing writing on the website of www.popmatters.com in July, 2010.

> "The best writing about American popular music—like the best popular American music itself—reveals hidden but profound connections between styles, performers, communities, races, and historical periods that at first glance seem all but self-contained."
> —Greil Marcus, *Dead Elvis: A Chronicle of Cultural Obsession*

All Music Guide's Richie Unterberger suggests that "Elvis Presley may be the single most important figure in American 20th century popular music". This relatively uncontroversial statement is backed up not only by Elvis's undeniable contribution to the popularization of rock and roll, but also the likelihood that he has sold more recordings worldwide than any other artist of any kind: plausible sales estimates top one *billion*. The unending streams of literature about Presley and visitors to Graceland, his National Historical Landmark home in Memphis, testify to this icon's entrenched place in American popular consciousness.

Bing Crosby is today a relic of another era—remembered, if at all, as the old man who sang "White Christmas". A cursory examination of the facts will reveal, however, that this is not how he was viewed in his day, nor does such willful ignorance begin to do justice to his outstanding achievements as a performer and entertainer. As Gary Giddins makes clear in his biography *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams (The Early Years: 1903-1940)*, Crosby's dominance over the landscape of American popular song during the 1930s and '40s places him, along with Elvis, among just a handful of vocalists who could arguably be called the most popularly significant in the 20th century. In the words of John Brush, in the same context as Unterberger:

> "Bing Crosby was, without doubt, the most popular and influential media star of the first half of the 20th century. The undisputed best-selling artist until well into the rock era (with over half a billion records in circulation), the most popular radio star of all time,

and the biggest box-office draw of the 1940s, Crosby dominated the entertainment world from the Depression until the mid-'50s, and proved just as influential as he was popular."

Notwithstanding the noxious coat of dust only beginning to come off Crosby's reputation, superficial similarities between Crosby and Presley are easy to identify. As John Mark Dempsey notes in a 2007 article, "Bing Crosby: Rock 'n' Roll Godfather", journalist Russell Baker was aware of the commonalities between Crosby and Presley as early as 1977, tracing a few of them when the two died that year in close succession:

> *"Both came from obscurity to national recognition while quite young and became very rich. Both lacked formal musical education and went on to movie careers despite a lack of acting skills. Both developed distinctive styles that were originally scorned by critics and subsequently studied as pioneer developments in the art of popular song."*

As his checklist of parallels suggests, these two singers' rises and evolutions bear a striking resemblance. In fact, the commonalities are at once broader and also more specific than Baker's observations reveal. It is now possible to see Crosby's success not as a prior model against which Presley would assert himself, but rather, as a template that Elvis would adapt and exploit. Moreover, it is increasingly apparent that the dominant narratives of American popular song—which project cultural values and tensions onto iconic stars—are embodied by and illuminated in the similar trajectories of their careers.

Both singers helped create the now familiar story of pop music they star in: a recurring, uniquely American tale of influence, integration, idolization and commercialization.

Influence

Though it may surprise certain rock and roll fans untutored in the history of Tin Pan Alley, Crosby exerted a substantial, if indirect influence, on Presley. The man who popularized the smooth baritone style that came to be known as crooning, Crosby was—in the words of John Potter, in his book *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology*—"[a] natural with a microphone…[who] also managed to incorporate jazz phrasing and style into the commercial music of Tin Pan Alley." Crosby would have been virtually impossible to avoid and, indeed, during the same Sun session that produced "That's All Right" and "Blue Moon of Kentucky", Elvis recorded a prior Crosby hit, "Harbor Lights". Later, Elvis would adopt a similar vocal style for his many popular ballads such as "Love Me Tender" and "Are You Lonesome Tonight". Though he expressed a preference for Dean Martin (himself a Crosby emulator), Elvis sang at times with Crosby's lyricism, vibrato and soft high register.

Yet, Crosby's influence on Presley is but one example of a broader parallel between Crosby and Presley: each man's ability to absorb and synthesize preexisting models of musical expression and fashion a new one—distinct and later seminal in its own right. As a young man growing up in Spokane, Washington in the late teens and early 1920s, Crosby was taken with then-developing jazz styles that seeped into many recordings. In *The Great American Popular Singers: Their Lives, Careers, and Art*, Henry Pleasants lists just a few musicians who influenced Crosby as he began singing:

> "The great jazz musicians of the time were his idols. He heard them all—Louis Armstrong, Mildred Bailey, Cab Calloway, Ethel Waters and many more—and as a member of the Whiteman orchestra he was greatly impressed by Bix Beiderbecke (with whom he roomed for a while), Eddie Lang, Jack Teagarden, Frankie Trumbauer and Joe Venuti."

Joe Venuti accompanies Bing on an early radio show.

Now credited as a pioneering synthesizer of jazz and pop who would transform American popular song during the golden age of Tin Pan Alley, Crosby lent a voice of syncopation to the jazz-steeped compositions of such songwriters as Harold Arlen and George Gershwin. This rhythmic sensibility, coupled with Crosby's intimate baritone, helped solidify and spread a template for popular singing perfectly suited to the new age of electrical recording, the microphone and radio. Popular singers in Crosby's wake did not emulate the older model of acoustic belting that Al Jolson had exemplified,

nor did they confine themselves to rigid, pre-jazz rhythms. Rather, as Terry Teachout notes, in a 2001 *Commentary* article, "Whatever Happened to Bing Crosby?":

> "Dozens of other pop singers based their styles on his, among them Russ Columbo, Perry Como, Bob Eberle, Billy Eckstine, Dick Haymes, and Dean Martin. 'All of them tried to be Crosbys,' one of them wryly admitted. 'You were either a high Crosby or a low Crosby.'"

Likewise, Elvis, who was born in Mississippi but spent his formative teenage years in Memphis, grew up exposed to a range of musical styles that would manifest themselves in his recordings. Raised in a Pentecostal church, Presley had plenty of exposure to the intensity of gospel singing. As Greil Marcus recounts in *Mystery Train*, Presley also took in the varied secular styles of Memphis and beyond:

> "On the radio, he listened with his family to the old music of the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, to current stars like Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, Bob Wills, Hank Williams, and to white gospel groups like the Blackwood Brothers. Elvis touched the soft center of American music when he heard and imitated Dean Martin and the operatics of Mario Lanza; he picked up Mississippi blues singers like Big Bill Broonzy, Big Boy Crudup, Lonnie Johnson, and the new Memphis music of Rufus Thomas and Johnny Ace, mostly when no one was around because that music was naturally frowned upon."

Elvis combined diverse idioms, from initial numbers like "That's All Right", which juxtaposed the harmonic, melodic, and vocal structures of blues with the chop-chop rhythm and arpeggio guitar lines of hillbilly country, to "Heartbreak Hotel", which John Potter notes, "has almost nothing to do with C&W [country and western]...[but rather] has its roots firmly in urban blues and jazz blues" and includes moments of lyrical crooning. Like Crosby, Elvis helped popularize a distinctive new music, the echoes of which could be heard in much of the popular music that followed it—from the energetic rhythms of Brill Building Pop to the second wave rock and roll heralded by the British Invasion.

Integration

As should be readily apparent from their influences, the musical threads that Crosby and Presley drew upon in crafting their styles were ones that emerged from African American traditions that had been evolving since before the beginning of the century. Both artists—as well as the formidable musical impresarios who played instrumental roles in cultivating their sounds and careers—were conscious of the racial associations of their musical appropriation. Moreover, this dimension of their stylistic integration became a significant, controversial touchstone in the histories written around each performer—at the time (Presley) and in retrospect (Crosby).

Bing Crosby's big break as a performer came from Paul Whiteman, a man infamous in the annals of jazz history for his explicit, oft berated mission to turn what he perceived to be the crude inspiration of African American jazz into a sophisticated American art music to rival the best of Europe. In 1926, Whiteman, already a very successful bandleader who dubbed himself the "King of Jazz", hired Crosby—who had been developing his talent in vaudeville—as a full-time singer. While he sang with Al Rinker and Harry Barris (Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys), Crosby learned from the great jazz instrumentalists in Whiteman's orchestra. In his biography, Giddins quotes Bing, recalling time he spent sitting in on jam sessions with those band members:

> "I didn't contribute anything but I listened and learned," Bing recalled. "I felt my style then was a cross between Al Jolson and a musical instrument. I was now being influenced by these musicians...Bix [Beiderbecke], Bill Challis, even Frank Trumbauer would make suggestions to me for my vocalizing and I'd give it a try."

Though the Whiteman cast that helped tutor Bing was white, several of its members—Beiderbecke especially—are widely considered to have been pioneering artists of "authentic" (read: black) jazz. Crosby was also heavily influenced by Louis Armstrong (who became a lifelong friend) and other aforementioned black jazz artists such as Cab Calloway and Ethel Waters.

In the early 20th century, jazz, and the white appropriation thereof, was controversial in many quarters. As Giddins puts it:

> "Not everyone understood the racial collusion taking place in the music world, though many who did were outraged and delivered stringent imprecations. *Ladies' Home Journal* located cause and effect between jazz and rape, and cautioned its readers 'Jazz is the expression of protest against law and order, the Bolshevik element of license striving for expression in music.'"

While Crosby's style never incited the controversy that Elvis's did, the racial component was nevertheless clear, and significant. If Whiteman's whitewashing of jazz accounts for his dismissal by most jazz critics and historians, Crosby's application of jazz phrasing to popular song (which became such a mainstreamed procedure that it quickly ceased to sound like integration) may help explain why he is seldom mentioned in current jazz histories, which often disparage, or simply ignore, "inauthentic" jazz appropriation. Crosby is overlooked despite recognition of his importance by such esteemed jazz critics as Giddins and Nat Hentoff, the latter of whom writes, in *Listen to the Stories*:

"Although Crosby is most renowned as what used to be called a crooner—someone who transforms ballads into intimate conversations—he also, when the spirit moved him, sang jazz with buoyant authority. He was not just a "jazz-influenced" singer. Crosby could be the real thing…even on the ballads there are touches of phrasing and rhythm that indicate Crosby was never without—in his head—the company of jazz musicians."

If Whiteman helped direct Crosby toward his musical miscegenation, it was Sun Records owner and producer Sam Phillips who modeled that approach for Elvis with similar explicitness. Yet when Phillips engineered Presley's seminal Sun sessions—the first cuts he released, and the ones that remain best loved and remembered by most critics—he had no pretensions of smoothing out the rough edges of country or blues. A man who had already recorded such blues giants as B.B. King and Howlin' Wolf, Phillips was intent on presenting Presley in the rugged glory of clacking, wailing, country-blues. Accounts differ somewhat regarding the specifics of the early Sun sessions and Phillips's part in them, and clarity may be at times difficult to find amid the tangled webs of memory and mythology. By all accounts, however, Phillips played an instrumental, essential role in shaping Elvis's sound—which included, at the least, pairing him with Scotty Moore on guitar and Bill Black on bass. In his classic *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, Charlie Gillett offers a glimpse into the scene, quoting the illuminating, if untrustworthy memory of Elvis himself, as relayed to one interviewer:

"'Mr. Phillips said he'd coach me if I'd come over to the studio as often as I could. It must have been a year and a half before he gave me an actual session. At last he let me try a western song—and it sounded terrible. But the second idea he had was the one that jelled. "You want to make some blues?" he suggested over the 'phone, knowing I'd always been a sucker for that kind of jive. He mentioned Big Boy Crudup's name and maybe others too. I don't remember. All I know is, I hung up and ran 15 blocks to Mr. Phillips' [sic] office before he'd gotten off the line—or so he tells me. We talked about the Crudup records I knew—"Cool Disposition", "Rock Me, Mama", "Hey Mama", "Everything's All Right", and others, but settled for "That's All Right", one of my top favorites…'"

What is unquestionable is that Phillips and Presley succeeded, setting in motion the latter's legendary, controversial rise to stardom. The sense of rebellion implicit in Elvis's music was not just a function of his sexually charged hip shaking but also directly related to the "black" elements of his music, and their appropriation by a popular white performer. It is often said that rock and roll is blues with a backbeat. While this oversimplifies matters, it helps explain how contemporary listeners—especially ones not versed in the nuances of either style—might equate the two, and amid the racism of the time, deride rock and roll as degenerate "negro" music.

Idolization

Though both Crosby and Presley were beloved as vocalists, their outsized successes cannot be explained primarily in terms of purely "musical" virtues. Both figures also created distinct public identities corresponding to their musical styles that allowed fans to project onto them values and ideals, which in turn became inseparable from reactions to the music itself. Moreover, both figures exploited media constructed images of themselves: uniquely American manifestations of detached, unshakable charisma.

In his early years with the Rhythm Boys, Bing's debt to African American style helped create a sense of him as hip or cool. Artie Shaw alludes to this in a quote that appears on the back cover of Giddins's *A Pocketful of Dreams*: "The first thing you have to understand about Bing Crosby is that he was the first hip white person born in the United States." When Crosby expanded his media presence to radio and movies, he honed the genial charm and mildly self-effacing manner that perfectly complemented the smooth tones and effortless swing of his vocal performances.

Crosby's movie roles played a particularly significant role in solidifying his image. In "Bing on a Binge: Casting-Against-Type in *The Country Girl*," Linda A. Robinson writes:

Father O'Malley meets Rise Stevens again in *Going My Way*.

"Significantly, most of Crosby's screen roles were all the same role: in the 1930s, he was the easy-going crooner, never taking life too serious, and with *Going My Way*, this on-screen character was enriched with a warm tolerance that enhanced his insouciant attitude toward formalities and unflappable calm in the face of life's difficulties... Crosby was also perceived to *be* the character he played or, putting it the other way, his film characters were perceived to *be* 'Bing Crosby', the individual. Indeed, few stars made as great an effort to collapse his film 'image' into the public perception of the man himself."

In a new introduction to the 2001 edition of *Call Me Lucky*, Bing's "as told to" memoir, Giddins adds: "Beyond his mastery of the vocal art and of light comedy, Crosby personified something profoundly and unalterably American. Through fifteen years of Depression and war, he became our voice, manner, and disposition." Adult-themed, implicitly patriotic songs such as the Depression era lament "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" enhanced listener identification, as did Crosby's many V-Discs and performances for servicemen in World War II.

From the start, Elvis was "hip" incarnate and the force of his personality matched the rough, instinctual musical aesthetic he molded from the raw materials of black blues. Elvis's unbridled energy, rhythmic swagger and boyish good looks embodied youth just as teenagers were emerging as a newly liberated, soon-to-be-dominant consumer group. (An adult personality, Bing starred in his Academy Award winning blockbuster *Going My Way* not long before he turned 42—the age at which Elvis, whose youth eventually seemed to fade all the more quickly for its prolonged vitality, died.) The nearly universal appeal that Elvis eventually engendered, however, arose from a perception of him not just as a rebel but also as an all-American boy—one who served in the Army in the late '50s and sang a string of Crosbyesque ballads in the early '60s. As with Crosby, insouciance always remained a key aspect of Elvis's personality. As Marcus writes in *Mystery Train*:

"You can hear that distance, that refusal to really commit himself, in his best music and his worst; if the throwaway is the source of most of what is pointless about Elvis, it is also at the heart of much of what is exciting and charismatic."

Commercialization

The successes of Crosby and Presley often seemed more about image than music. This might never have been lamentable, however, were it not for the fact that their music itself also often seemed more about image than music. Under the influence of notoriously savvy, bottom-line driven businessmen, Crosby and Presley both recorded unfathomable quantities of western, Hawaiian, patriotic, holiday, film, and religious records—many of which have been derided by critics as "novelties". In each case the clear aim was to use diversification to broaden the artists' mainstream appeal—and thrust as many recordings on consumers as possible. (This partly explains why both artists' discographies are unwieldy messes littered with insignificant recordings and confounding repackaging.) Crosby and Presley were always commercial artists, and the profit motive may have been, in the aggregate, as much an inspiration as a diversion. Yet it remains true that both seemed to compromise certain aesthetic values for the sake of commercial gain—and in a way that bore directly on their idolization.

A large part of the commercialization of Crosby's career, of course, was rooted in his acting career, and the transplanting of his unaltered, regular guy persona onto role after role. Similarly motivated by a drive to make Crosby the icon of "everyman", though, were the genre-hopping novelty cuts he recorded at the direction of Jack Kapp, head of Decca Records, beginning in 1934. In Giddins's biography of Crosby we learn that "Jack was denigrated by many insiders as Killer Kapp, for killing Bing's early greatness in a relentless exploitation to sell more and more records." But there also seems to be some truth in Kapp's retort that "if he hadn't diversified his talent, he would remain just a popular singer of popular songs." At the least, the Kapp tack seems to have helped elevate Crosby the icon (if not the singer) to the place that Whitney Balliett described, when writing in a *Saturday Review* piece on Bing's memoir that

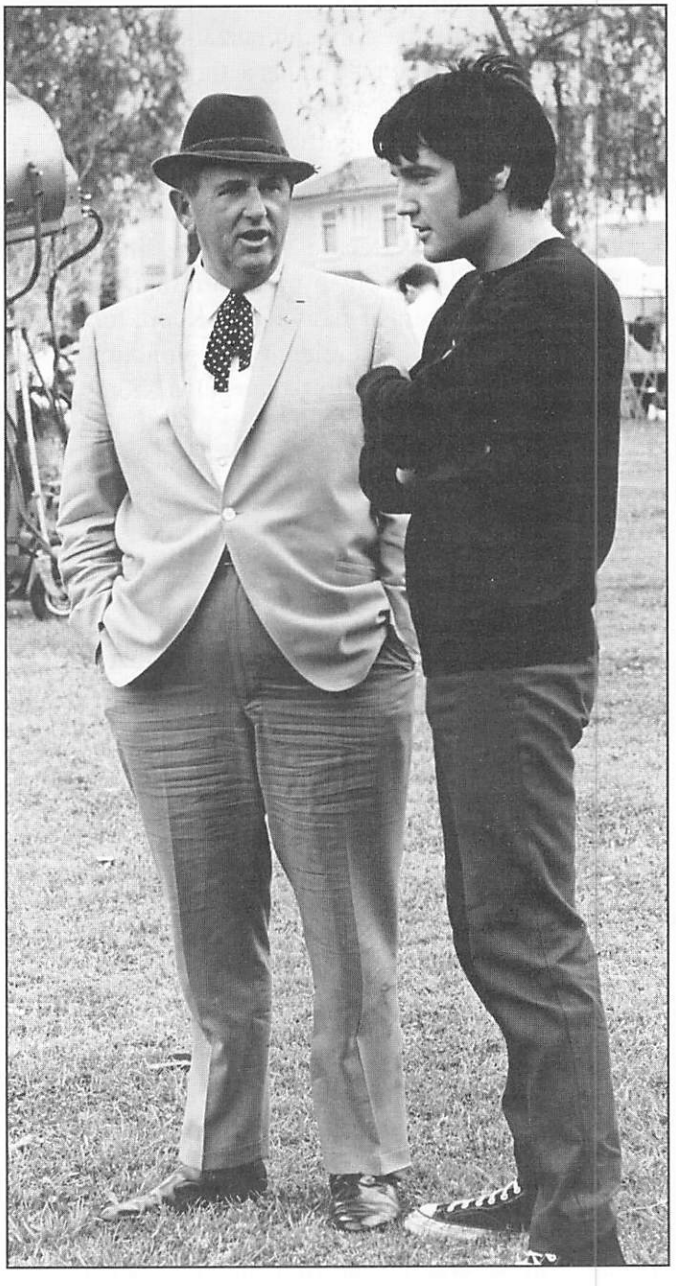
"[Crosby] has emerged as a figure that is often affectionately regarded as the ideal American male...[If] the bigger-than-life common man is a new figure to the world and is the century's hero, Bing may also be one of the first of the Universal Common Men."

Career efforts that focused on projecting Crosby's common man persona, however, risked squandering his distinctiveness: making him everyman but also no man at all.

As Kapp did to Crosby, Colonel Tom Parker did to Presley. Ruthlessly driven to brand and market Elvis, his manager is alternatively seen as the greedy capitalist who spoiled Elvis's greatness or a prescient mastermind more responsible for the Elvis phenomenon than the king of rock and roll himself. Parker had a much firmer hold on Presley than any business partner did on Crosby, and it was under the Colonel's management that Elvis appeared in several dozen fluff movies, which, like Crosby's, successfully cashed in on and spread his iconic image (though none earned critical acclaim as had Crosby's best). It was also during this time that Elvis began recording more ballads and delving into genre exercises for his western and Hawaiian films. Whether or not the Colonel Parker legend is largely justified, it has come to embody in the collective consciousness of Elvis appreciators the perceived decline—particularly the

diversion from performance of pure rock and roll—that took hold of Presley in the 1960s and continued virtually unabated until his death.

The artistic merits of these decisions aside, they undoubtedly added a new dimension to Elvis's appeal and helped entrench his popular presence. They also seem to have appeared in conjunction with a stretching of Elvis's musical and cultural persona that took him far beyond the limited appeal of a rebellious rocker. In *Mystery Train*, Greil Marcus traces this expansion of identity to its breaking point in the self-parody of Elvis's latter day performances:



The young Elvis with Colonel Parker.

> "The cultural range of his music has expanded to the point where it includes not only the hits of the day, but also patriotic recitals, pure country gospel, and really dirty blues; reviews of his concerts, by usually credible writers, sometimes resemble Biblical accounts of heavenly miracles...Elvis [in a late performance] transcends any real America by evading it. There is no John Brown in his "Battle Hymn," no romance in his "Dixie," no blood in his slave song. He sings with such a complete absence of musical personality that none of the old songs matter at all, because he has not committed himself to them; it could be anyone singing, or no one. It is in this sense, finally, that an audience is confirmed, that an America comes into being; lacking any real fear or joy, it is a throwaway America where nothing is at stake. The divisions America shares are simply smoothed away."

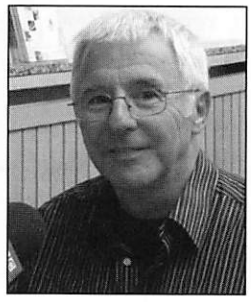
If taken out of context, Marcus's last few sentences could easily be mistaken for a rock and roll era critique of the unchallenging blandness of say, Bing Crosby.

Through the prism of these two careers, one can identify not only major shifts in style and audience in American popular song, but also the dominant, recurring themes of its conventional historiographies. These interconnected narrative threads of influence, integration, idolization, and commercialization are touchstones upon which our collective understanding of pop music in the 20th century hinges—the categories by which we trace the musical and historical importance of pop artists. Whether these frameworks will or should persist or are ripe for reexamination is partly a matter of speculation and to a large extent outside the scope of the present study. Examining Bing Crosby and Elvis Presley by the light of such rubrics seems not only to affirm the supremacy of two figures in 20th century popular music, but also to validate the critical standards themselves. Yet one must be wary of circular logic. These two pioneering men helped birth the very historical paradigms that situate and substantiate them.

Ben Ewing

(Editor: Ben Ewing is a student at Yale Law School who writes about music for 'Dusted Magazine' and film for 'Not Coming to a Theater Near You'.)

BING ON THE BOX



Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

Unfortunately, not many Bing movies appear to have been available for viewing but these three were noticed:

Going My Way	TCM
High Society	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM

USA Radio

The Crosby radio shows – which have kindly been made available by Bing Crosby Enterprises – have continued to be heard at weekly intervals on Sirius XM Radio's 40s on 4 channel. The shows air on Saturdays at 6 pm (ET) with rebroadcasts on Sundays at 11 am (ET) and Mondays at 12 am (ET). Sirius edits them by taking out the original commercials and inserting their own announcements. In May, Sirius started broadcasting two shows, one after the other, which made for a very pleasant hour. The shows heard since our last issue was prepared were:

Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 21st February, 1954
Guests: The Four Aces
Kraft Music Hall, 2nd March 1944
Guest: Lucille Ball
Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield, 12th March, 1952
Guests: Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 14th March, 1954
Guest: Peggy King
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 28th March, 1954
Guest: Frank Sinatra
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 9th April, 1953
Guest: Rosemary Clooney
Kraft Music Hall, 13th April 1944
Guest: Bob Hope
Kraft Music Hall, 19th April 1945
Guest: Yehudi Menuhin
Kraft Music Hall, 27th April 1944
Guest: Sonny Tufts
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 7th May, 1953
Guests: George Kainapau and his Island Serenaders
Kraft Music Hall, 11th May 1944
Guest: Keenan Wynn
Kraft Music Hall, 17th May 1945
Guests: Florence Alba and Eddie Heywood
Kraft Music Hall, 1st June 1944
Guest: Katina Paxinou
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 28th May, 1953
Guests: Joe Venuti and Lindsay Crosby
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 30th May, 1954
Guests: Gary and Lindsay Crosby
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 4th June, 1953
Guests: Joe Venuti and Lindsay Crosby
Kraft Music Hall, 8th June 1944
Guest: Cecil B. De Mille
(This was an abbreviated show due to news bulletins about the D-Day landings so Sirius added extracts from *Philco Radio Time* of 7th April 1948 to fill the time slot)
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 11th June, 1953
Guests: Joe Venuti and Lindsay Crosby
(To complete the hour of Crosby, Sirius added a lengthy extract from the KMH of 15th June 1944 and then several songs from *G. I. Journal* #48, 16th June 1944)
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 18th June, 1953
Guests: Joe Venuti and Lindsay Crosby
Kraft Music Hall, 22nd June 1944
Guest: George Murphy
(To complete the hour, Sirius added three songs from *Philco Radio Time* of 14th April 1948)
Kraft Music Hall, 29th June 1944
Guest: Roy Rogers
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 2nd July, 1953
Guests: Joe Venuti and Lindsay Crosby
(To complete the time slot, Sirius added four songs from *Philco Radio Time* of 19th February 1947)
Kraft Music Hall, 6th July 1944
Guests: Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey
Kraft Music Hall, 13th July 1944
Guest: Keenan Wynn
(Sirius added three songs from the Kraft Music Hall of 5th April 1945 to complete the hour)
Philco Radio Time, 11th June 1947
Guests: Alec Templeton and Ethel Merman
(Sirius added several songs from the Kraft Music Hall of 18th January 1945 to complete the hour)

Bing and Sonny Tufts clarify the script on a Kraft Music Hall broadcast.

Greg Van Beek has been continuing his weekly radio series called *Nostalgia Radio Time* on 1420 AM WJUB. As he has mentioned in his Editorial, Greg's show is on live for an hour each Saturday starting at 10 pm (CST) / 11 pm (ET) and since March he has been including a "Bing Sings" segment. Tune in, either locally via your radio at 1420 AM, or online at the www.1420thebreeze.com website. For those listening via their iPhone or Android, download the free TuneIn Radio app and search for WJUB. You can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to www.1420thebreeze.com and clicking on the 'audio archives' link.

On March 17, Greg had an expanded Crosby segment to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and he featured Bing singing:

> "Come Back to Erin" – "The Rose of Tralee" – "Dear Old Donegal" – "That Tumbledown Shack in Athlone" – "Galway Bay" – "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?" – "MacNamara's Band" – "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral" and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling".

Then in May he had a two-part celebration of Perry Como's centennial which included a great duet with Bing. On June 30, Greg's program was a special for Independence Day and he included an entire *Command Performance* show from June 17, 1944 hosted by Jack Benny with Bing, Georgia Gibbs, Harpo Marx, Gary Cooper, and Ann Miller. Bing sang a couple of songs including "My Blue Heaven" accompanied by Harpo Marx on the harp!

Arne Fogel's Saturday night radio program "The Bing Shift" is still heard on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN. and it can be heard internationally, via the KBEM-JAZZ 88 website. Go to http://arnefogel.com/index.php/home/ for a link. On his June 2nd show for example, Arne's theme was Bing Sings: "Lamour's Film Songs!" and he played:

> Personality - It Could Happen To You - The Moon and the Willow Tree - Moonlight and Shadows - You're Dangerous - The Moon of Manakoora
>
> PLUS: Granada - Someone You Love - I Got Plenty of Nuttin' - June Comes Around Every Year - You're Wonderful - J'Attendrai (I'll Be Yours) - There's a Cabin in the Pines - The Second Time Around - In the Still of the Night/I Could Have Danced All Night

Rich Conaty's long-running "The Big Broadcast" show from New York puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet. Rich saluted Bing's birthday on his April 29 broadcast playing no less than 14 Crosby songs during the show.

Member **Croft O'Toole** has alerted us to a weekly radio show that features old time radio shows and pop / jazz recordings of the 30's to 50's. Croft says Bing is featured often. The show, "Chatterbox Radio" airs from 6 pm - midnight (ET) Saturday's over station WECS, 90.1 FM from Willimantic, CT. It does stream online so can be heard via computers and smart phones at http://www.easternct.edu/wecs/

TV highlights - UK

Not too much to report in the UK but films shown included:

High Society	Channel 5
Road to Rio	BBC2
Robin and the 7 Hoods	BBC2
The Country Girl	Sky Classics

Also, *The Legendary Bing Crosby* programme appeared on Sky Arts2 in April and in June and it was good to see this again. Surprising how many people have mentioned this to me at my golf club.

UK radio

Bing guests on Perry's TV show in 1960.

Perry Como - The Singing Barber

There were many mentions of Bing in this Radio 2 one-hour programme on May 15 to celebrate Perry Como's centennial. Presented by Jimmy Young and produced by Mark Willis and Brian King, this was a very accurate look at Mr. C's career and it may well be that the producers had access to a recent book on Perry! Much sound archive material was used although Leo Sayer and Kaye Ballard sounded like new interviews.

The National Presenters

Russell Davies on his BBC Radio2 show on Sunday evenings continues to include Bing frequently in his most interesting show which celebrates the art, craft and inspiration of the popular song. His varied selections went from "Fool Me Some More" to "Sleigh Ride in July" and even "The Merry-Go-Run-Around". The latter song was an unusual choice and Russell admitted that he had never heard it before. In introducing the alternate

take of "Someday Sweetheart" from the latest volume of the Sepia series on June 3rd, Russell expressed his sorrow that the project has come to an end. Also he put the following on his show's web site.

> "It's sad to see the complete chronological Crosby series coming to an end. Started by John McNicholas on his Jonzo label, it ran to 51 volumes and took us from 1926 to September 1950, at which point Sepia stepped in to continue the task and, with Volume Ten of "Bing Crosby Through The Years", brings us as far as it is currently possible to go, for contractual reasons, to October 1958. Most of the tracks here were recorded with the Paul Weston orchestra and the Norman Luboff Choir, for a Christmas album of limited interest. But the CD concludes with a few rarities from much earlier – 1934/5; 1943 and 1947, that weren't available before. Our thanks go to Mr McNicholas and also Malcolm Macfarlane who oversaw the Sepia series: We hope that one day the amazing project will be completed. The number is Sepia 1192."

Russell's producer is Roy Oakshott and he contacted me in June seeking a copy of "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie" by Bing and Dinah Shore. Russell was adamant that he had heard this some years ago and Roy wondered if we could help. With great pleasure, I supplied the track which came from a Spokane LP titled "Birth of the Blues" containing the Screen Guild broadcast of January 1951 which coincidentally Lionel Pairpoint mentions in his article elsewhere in this issue. Russell gave me a nice credit in his show on July 8 and on the show's web page.

On other nationally networked programmes, **Desmond Carrington's** Friday night show usually has a particular theme each time and Bing has been heard on a few occasions. Desmond (aged 86) also had a separate series called *Desmond Carrington's Icons of the 50s* and he managed to slot "True Love" into one of the shows in March.

Elaine Paige on Sunday (Radio 2, Sundays 1 p.m.) includes a Crosby song now again and more so when Barbara Windsor stands in for Elaine. I think Barbara is a Bing fan!

The final hour on BBC Radio2 on Sunday nights is still being taken by **David Jacobs** but from April 8 the slot was used to repeat David's 13-part series on Frank Sinatra (first broadcast in 1998) in order to give David time to recover from two major operations. Mr. Jacobs (now aged 86) returned with his usual show on July 8 and included Bing singing "Incurably Romantic".

The local presenters

I am in contact with three of the radio presenters whose programmes I hear and I've made a point of regularly requesting the song of month from the BING calendar and they have been happy to acquiesce.

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet) invariably features Bing on her Sunday afternoon show and in the five month period ending on June 24 she played a very mixed selection of Bing's recorded work. She played 41 songs in all with titles varying from "Goodnight Irene" to "Talk to the Animals" to "My Isle of Golden Dreams". It was nice to hear "A Perfect Day" played for Pat and Trevor Wagstaff's 55th wedding anniversary. Your editor had been recently to see the musical *Wonderful Town* in which the song "A Quiet Girl" is heard so I requested Bing's version and Anne duly obliged. Please help Anne to keep up her good work by sending her requests by email to *anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk*

Anne has been the regular winner of the mythical "Bing on the Box" award but this time around she was almost pipped at the post by **Bill Rennells** who hosts *Harmony Nights.* This is heard on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet for three hours starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings.

Bill played 38 Bing songs and thanks must go to the many fans that sent in requests for Mr. Crosby. Stan White, Trevor Wagstaff and Ian Lawrence are regulars in this category. Your editor prompted Bill to play the songs of the month from the BING calendar and Bill kindly played "Ohio" from *Wonderful Town* for me as well.

I had also just been to see *Carousel* and naturally had to request "June Is Bustin' out All Over" from the musical for Mr. Rennells' first programme in June. Bill played an eclectic selection of Bing's work which varied from "The Old Lamplighter" through "Oh, You Crazy Moon" to "Gigi" from the latest Sepia. To celebrate Bing's birth date, Bill had a Crosby interlude when he played three consecutive Crosby tracks and he was another who played "A Perfect Day" for Pat and Trevor Wagstaff's wedding anniversary.

Wherever you are in the world, why not email *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk* and ask for a Bing record?

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** has been featuring Bing more frequently on his programme of big band swing and balladeers each Sunday from 3pm to 6pm. There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 7 days after the initial broadcast. Howard welcomes requests which can be emailed to *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.* I emailed Howard thanking him for playing Bing so regularly and he duly read out my email on air and went on to play my request "The Next Time It Happens".

"The Late Paul Barnes", the big band and jazz oriented show hosted by the award-winning **Paul Barnes** continues to be heard for two hours over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights. There's also a "Listen again" facility for up to 7 days after the initial broadcast. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk for this. A recent review of the BBC's radio audience has shown that Paul is getting more listeners than the nationally broadcast Radio2 at the time his show is heard which is amazing.

Mr. Barnes usually focuses on the Bing calendar in his first programme of the month and he has made amends for not covering the January and February calendars with lengthy segments each month since. In March, he played the soundtrack version of the Song of the Month "I Wish I Were Aladdin." It was a song Paul had never heard before and he commented "so glad I found it, utterly charming."

I WISH I WERE ALADDIN
Lyric and Music by MACK GORDON AND HARRY REVEL
From the Paramount Picture
"TWO FOR TONIGHT"
BING CROSBY • JOAN BENNETT
CRAWFORD MUSIC CORPORATION 1619 Broadway, New York City

Paul builds a nicely linked section around his review of our calendar by playing several Crosby songs and his April and May spots were excellent. In June, Paul admitted that he is not always very keen on our choice of song but he was very happy with "I Ain't Got Nobody" and he liked the picture too saying "quite a jolly photograph."

Paul was delighted to receive a mass of Jonzo CDs from John McNicholas to complete his collection and he played "Pretty Lips" and "Mississippi Mud" from these.

In our "Letters" section, Ted Laker mentioned that Bing is frequently heard on **Angel Radio** (www.angelradio.co.uk) and that Jim Reilly has a programme devoted to our Mr. Crosby on Tuesday nights at 8 p.m. UK time.

Also we must not overlook two other shows that like to feature our man and these are **Swingers & Singers** (Sun. 8-10p.m) presented by David Lowe on several BBC local radio stations in the South West (search under BBC Radio Devon for links) and **Mike Carey's Memorable Memories** (Sundays 5-7p.m.). Go to bbc.co.uk/derby for more details. There is a listen again facility.

Australia

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby radio show each week.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Celeste Holm, died on July 15 at the age of 95. To Crosby fans, she will always be known as the wise-cracking girl-friend of Frank Sinatra in *High Society* but she had a wide-ranging career outside that classic film. Born and raised in New York City, Holm grew up as an only child. Her mother, Jean Parke, was an American portrait artist and author; her father, Theodor Holm, was a Norwegian businessman whose company provided marine adjustment services for Lloyd's of London. Because of her parents' occupations, she travelled often during her youth and attended various schools in Holland, France and the United States. She graduated from University High School for Girls in Chicago, where she performed in many school stage productions. She then studied drama at the University of Chicago before becoming a stage actress in the late 1930s. Holm appeared in over two dozen Broadway shows, including her debut in 1938 in *Gloriana*, and including *Oklahoma*, in which she originated the role of Ado Annie (the girl who "Cain't Say No"), *Bloomer Girl, The King and I, Mame, Candida*, and her last Broadway appearance in

1991's *I Hate Hamlet.* She earned an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her work in the film, *Gentlemen's Agreement,* and received Oscar nominations for *Come to the Stable* and *All About Eve.* Her other major films included *The Tender Trap*, *High Society,* and *Three Little Girls in Blue.* Celeste Holm earned Emmy Award nominations for *Insight* and *Backstairs at the White House* and a Daytime Emmy nomination for *Loving*. Ms. Holm appeared as the Fairy Godmother in the 1965 television version of *Cinderella* and in numerous television series, including *Nancy, Archie Bunker's Place, Falcon Crest, The Beat,* and *Promised Land.* She is survived by her fifth husband, Frank Basile, and her sons. On April 29, 2004, her 87th birthday, Holm married opera singer Frank Basile, age 41. The couple met in October 1999 at a fund-raiser at which Basile was hired to sing. Soon after their marriage, Holm and Basile sued to overturn the irrevocable trust that was created in 2002 by Daniel Dunning, Holm's younger son. The trust was ostensibly set up to shelter Holm's financial assets from taxes, although Basile contended the real purpose of the trust was to keep him away from her money. The lawsuit began a five-year battle with her sons which cost millions of dollars, and according to an article in The *New York Times* left Holm and her husband with a fragile hold on their home, which Holm purchased for $10,000 cash in 1953 from her film earnings, and which is now believed to be worth at least $2,000,000. According to her husband, Holm was treated for memory loss in recent years, battled skin cancer and bleeding ulcers, and had a collapsed lung, hip replacements, and pacemakers. In 2003, Celeste appeared on a special *Larry King Live* about Bing and she was very generous in her praise of Bing.

Celeste Holm with her co-stars in High Society.

Robert Finkel, the Emmy Award-winning TV director and producer passed way on April 30 at the age of 94. In his long career, Finkel produced TV series with Andy Williams, Jerry Lewis, Phyllis Diller and other stars. He directed sitcoms including "Barney Miller" and "The Bob Newhart Show." Bob Finkel also produced specials with Bing, Elvis Presley and John Denver, among others. He captured the Peabody Award for the widely acclaimed "The Julie Andrews Show", as well as the European Festival Award—the 'Silver Rose of Montreux'. In 1968, he served as Executive Producer for "Elvis", the first television special starring Elvis Presley.

Finkel's three Emmys were for "The Andy Williams Show". He was nominated ten times for various shows as producer and twice for writing. He also produced the Emmy Awards Telecast eleven times and the Academy Awards show twice. He received acclaim for his ten-year role in guiding "The People's Choice Awards" shows into becoming a model for similar shows.

Your Editor interviewed Bob Finkel in 2007 in connection with the book on Perry Como put together with Ken Crossland and naturally we talked about Mr. Crosby too. Mr. Finkel produced several of Bing's 1970s shows and found him to be "a delight." They came together through the GAC agency and were comfortable with each other within five minutes. He said that Bing had a great command of language and Mr. Finkel treasured the many hand-written letters from him. He always found that Bing was far more interested in sports results than the script of the show. His wife, Kathryn, was wonderful in the way she looked after their children on the show.

Mr. Finkel mentioned that Bing was seriously color-blind and on one occasion, Bing was taking him to the racetrack. Bing was driving an old car and as they drove along, Mr. Finkel queried how he coped with traffic lights. Bing replied, "Well, it's easy, if the light on top is illuminated, it's green, if the one on the bottom is lit, it's red, er, no, it's green, er..." At that point, Mr. Finkel said "Let me out of the car!"

David A. Mahoney, who died at the age of 86 on July 8, was one of the original Four Aces vocal group that enjoyed several big hits such as "Three Coins in the Fountain", "Love Is a Many Splendoured Thing" and "Tell Me Why" in the 1950s. The group appeared on Bing's GE show on two occasions in February 1954 and sang with him on "Heart of My Heart" and "Tell Me Why" as well as singing independently. Mr. Mahoney and the lead singer, Al Alberts, had begun performing as instrumentalists while together in the Navy and later they added Lou Silvestri and Rosario Vaccaro. Mahoney left the group in the early 1960s and subsequently became the owner of the David A. Mahoney Insurance Agency in Woodlyn, Delaware County, PA.

Marilyn McLachlan, Bing's niece, passed away in California on May 29th at age 84. She leaves her husband Bob, and four children. Her mother,

Catherine Crosby Mullin, was Bing's sister who had married Edward Mullin in 1926. Marilyn's quiet demeanor made her a favorite with her many Crosby cousins. Bing made a specific bequest of $15,000 to Marilyn in his Will.

Margaret Field, the mother of movie star Sally Field died last November at the age of 89. She was an actress in her own right but never achieved the fame of her daughter. She appeared in three of Bing's films when she was under-contract to Paramount Pictures. That trio of brief appearances comprised *Blue Skies* (1946), *Welcome Stranger* (1947) and *Riding High* (1950). Only *Welcome Stranger* warranted an on-screen credit way down the cast list. Although she had what amounted to little more than walk-on parts in a dozen other major films, it took a pair of early 1950s science fiction films to establish a fan base that followed her to the end of her life: *The Man From Planet X* (1951) and *Captive Women* (1952).

Margaret Field resists the advances of the man from Planet X.

Her first marriage resulted in a daughter, Sally Field. Her second marriage was to actor Jock Mahoney in the early 1950s and she appeared in mainly western films for the rest of that decade, usually billed as Maggie Mahoney. Once low budget dramas became the province of television she extended her acting career into the 1970s with dozens of small screen appearances. She was long retired from showbusiness at the time of her death.

Audrey Young, an actress at Paramount Pictures in the 1940s and the widow of director Billy Wilder, has died. She was 89. Young was a starlet and contract player at Paramount appearing in mostly uncredited roles when she met Wilder in 1944 on the set of his film *The Lost Weekend*, which starred Ray Milland as an alcoholic on a bender. Young, who had been a singer with the Tommy Dorsey Band, sometimes appeared as a lone singer or as part of singing group in her movies, as in Bing's films *Blue Skies*, *Duffy's Tavern* and the Crosby related *Out of This World.* After 1949, the year she married Wilder, she had only one other film role, in 1955's Doris Day-James Cagney starrer *Love Me or Leave Me*.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord recalls a memorable meeting with Bing in 1966.

It was a bleak Ottawa winter afternoon in February 1966 when I received a long distance telephone call that brightened my mood and lifted my spirits. I was "on the air" conducting my afternoon radio program when my technician placed up against the studio window a hurried note that was barely legible. He excitedly got my attention when I read, "Bing Crosby is on line four!" He was new to Ottawa and unaware of my friendship with Rich Little.

As I was in the midst of reading a script I casually waited until I was finished. I wrongly assumed that my old pal Rich was on the line and that he was calling me in his amazing impression of Bing's voice.

I was cautious answering the call not wanting to be a victim again of one of Rich's vocal pranks. I was expecting that at any moment I would suddenly be talking to "Jimmy Stewart", "John Wayne" or anyone of his famous voices.

Earlier that year I received a media news release that Bing would be in Toronto headlining an all-star television special for the Canadian Easter Seal Campaign. I immediately wrote to him and suggested that if his scheduling permitted during his busy Canadian sojourn that we might get together. The aforementioned long distance phone call was his thoughtful response.

It was 21 years earlier that I first met Bing at Paramount Studios in the summer of 1945. Although we were often in contact by correspondence, long distance telephone and via tape on radio broadcasts, we had not met again in person over the intervening years. Finally the time had come for a reunion when our travel plans and schedules were in sync. Immediately I made arrangements to travel to Toronto with my wife Elaine. It would be a nostalgia trip back to our old home town from our adopted home, Ottawa.

Arriving in Toronto at the home of my wife's parents, I received an unexpected and greatly appreciated phone call from Bing. I had almost forgotten that I had included in our correspondence, the date of our arrival and the telephone number where we would be staying. My dear mother-in-law answered the phone and looked at me and said with surprise and disbelief, "It's for you – I think it's Bing Crosby!" It was indeed—the mellow lilt of his distinctive baritone voice was unmistakable.

The following day we met him at the theatre where the Easter television special was being rehearsed and taped. As soon as we met it was like we were two long-time friends who had never been out-of-touch. He was, as in the past, gracious and "at ease" friendly. I recall in our conversation my mentioning that on our trip from Ottawa we passed by an Ontario town that bore his surname, 'Crosby', which he suggested was an example of how the Crosby clan from the Emerald Isle "got around". There was a lot of jocularity in our conversations that delightful day.

Gord and Elaine with Bing in 1966.

When discussing his recordings with one of his favourite accompanists, Buddy Cole, he became reflective and sorrowful. He told me that the brilliant pianist had suffered a sudden fatal heart attack two years earlier and that he was greatly indebted to him for his inventive arrangements and friendship. With my wife sitting between us in the theatre we exchanged anecdotes and fond recollections of our families and friends.

When Kathryn entered the theatre she was beset by the media with questions about Bing. She deflected their queries by kindly suggesting that they talk to me about Bing's career, since I had followed his life and times for many years. My fellow members of the media understandably and rightly so chose to ignore my presence and concentrate on the Crosbys.

The cast and crew of the broadcast were captivated by Bing's friendly personality. Despite his genuine modest manner, it was evident to everyone that we were in the presence of an incomparable performer.

At the rehearsal and on the program he sang with the aplomb and charm that others have tried to emulate. His voice was never more mellow. He featured his opening selection, "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along", in his delightful, familiar, breezy manner. Irving Berlin's "Easter Parade" offered Canadian songstress Juliette the opportunity to join him for an appropriate duet. The handicapable Easter Seal children's chorus joined the Oscar winning star to perform from *Going My Way*, the Academy Award winner, "Swinging on a Star". But his most impressive performance was an emotional interpretation of the tender ballad, "The Men in My Little Girl's Life".

The ease with which Bing emceed the show was infectious. The variety bill included: comedian Jackie Vernon, who was appearing in Toronto, The Brian Brown Jazz Trio, Juliette and Canada's foremost folk singer and composer, Gordon Lightfoot.

During the years that followed Bing's memorable Toronto visit, we met several times at social and media functions. My three taping sessions at Bing and Kathryn's Hillsboro home made possible the production of our 14 hour CD series, "The Crosby Years".

The late Alex Barris was one of Canada's finest journalists and a good friend. He was also the writer of the Easter Seal program. He wrote the following in his popular *Toronto Telegram* column dated March 8, 1966:

> *"Bing was in Toronto yesterday and anybody who needs to be told his last name can quit reading right here. At rehearsals for the Easter Seal Show he won easily the respect of everyone around him for his unflagging professionalism. During the taping of the broadcast he won the hearts of the audience simply by being exactly the Bing Crosby they wanted to see and hear."*

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: Gord's wonderful radio series, "The Crosby Years" remains available — see Trading Post for details.)

SEVENTY FIVE YEARS AGO

The Del Mar Turf Club opened on July 3, 1937 with an attendance of fifteen thousand. The first race at 2:24 p.m. was won by Bing's horse "High Strike." The directors of the track were Bing, Pat O'Brien, Kent Allen, Charles Howard, and William Quigley. Bing hosted a huge dinner dance in the clubhouse following the races, with Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra playing for the dancing. This started a pattern of regular Saturday night stage shows involving celebrities at Del Mar.

On July 12, Bing had his first recording session with John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra which included Spike Jones playing the drums in the Trotter ensemble. They recorded four songs from the film *Double or Nothing* including "The Moon Got in My Eyes" which reached the top of the USA charts in September. The British publication *The Gramophone* liked the other recordings too

> The star disc of a trio by Bing Crosby is undoubtedly Brunswick 02499, which contains "All You Want to Do Is Dance" and "It's the Natural Thing to Do."

These show that Bing is still untouchable.
(*The Gramophone*, January 1938)

On September 1, the New York premiere of Bing's film *Double or Nothing* took place.

The Bing Crosby-Martha Raye followers turned out en masse yesterday morning at the Paramount (Manager Bob Weitman had counted 3,000 by 10 a.m.) to greet the troubadour and the lady of the cavernous mouth in *Double Or Nothing*, their new conglomeration of songs, dances, variety acts, romance and comedy. It is a tuneful show with three numbers better than average—"It's The Natural Thing To Do", "It's On, It's Off" and "The Moon Got In My Eyes"—but a show which lacks buoyance and sparkle, perhaps because of unimaginative direction....Although Bing delivers five songs in his customary agreeable voice and makes a pleasant enough suitor for the fair Mary Carlisle, it is really the explosive Miss Raye, the madcap adagio dance team of Ames and Arno and the Calgary Brothers (specialists in inebriation) who provide the brighter moments.
(*The New York Times*, September 2, 1937)

Bing had been on vacation from the *Kraft Music Hall* since July and he sent a hand written airmail letter to BINGANG magazine which was printed in the October 1937 edition.

Dear Bingang,
Vacation time is over and getting ready to level again. New picture should start within ten days and the ole Kraft Music Hall will ring with my dulcet tones on the seventh of October. Nothing of unusual interest to report but I will await with anxiety your reaction to these activities – Thanks for everything.
Bing

On October 13, Bing started filming *Doctor Rhythm* with Mary Carlisle, Beatrice Lillie, and Andy Devine. The film's working title was "The Badge of Policeman O'Roon." Directed by Frank Tuttle, it was a Major Films production released through Paramount. Musical direction was by George Stoll with orchestration by John Scott Trotter. After completion of the film, a financial dispute arose between the producer, Emanuel Cohen, and Paramount who were to release the film. It is probable that, because of this, Paramount edited the film, cutting out a scene featuring Louis Armstrong.

Later in October, Bing took a few days off from his film work to take his *Kraft Music Hall* show to Spokane. Whilst there, he accepted the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Gonzaga University. On October 21, the *Kraft Music Hall* was broadcast from the Masonic Temple, Spokane, with guests Connie Boswell, Mary Carlisle and Edmund Lowe. Some months later, Bing's mother was asked about his honorary degree.

Bing receives his honorary degree from Gonzaga.

"He was really proud of that," his mother said. "He told me he had a hard time to keep from crying a couple of times when they were giving him the degree. And he was awfully pleased with the football blanket. That was the first time they'd ever given one to anybody who wasn't on the team."

It is not generally known in Hollywood, though the Spokane papers carried the story, that Bing footed the bill for his hometown celebration. He spent about $5,000 to bring all his entertainers with him, to show the home folks a big time, and went to great trouble arranging for the radio program to be broadcast from Gonzaga.

The $20,000 that he collected in admissions to the broadcast was given immediately to the university.
(Lucie Neville, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 6, 1938)

FIFTY YEARS AGO

In the UK, the British Crosby Society's magazine, *Crosby Post*, was issued every two months despite a crisis when Editor Cecil Westrope abruptly resigned mid-year. He was replaced by Frank Murphy who promptly lifted considerably the standard and tone of the magazine's contents. The film of *The Road to Hong Kong* had been released as had a soundtrack LP and a single. Frank reviewed the single in the April 1962 issue

as follows:
Let's Not Be Sensible (with Joan Collins) / Teamwork (with Bob Hope)
Top side of this great new single from Decca is for me "Teamwork" which has both greats at the top of their form. There's a typical humorous jibe from Bob as Bing attempts a high note "That's quite a stab, from old flab" and the whole thing goes with a wonderful swing. I'm sure that whoever wrote the musical score could have found a better ballad in the store than "Let's Not Be Sensible" which though it has some beautiful Crosby moments, just doesn't seem to be able to get off the ground. In the film, Bing fights hard to make a success of this lone opportunity he has of singing in the old familiar style, but for me the material just isn't there.

The soundtrack LP was reviewed in the June 1962 issue and again Frank Murphy was not overly impressed.
I can't really understand the reason for a release of a complete LP devoted to the new Road film, though one must commend Decca for issuing a useful souvenir of this great 1962 box office winner. For collectors seeking such a souvenir I can thoroughly recommend this LP. All the music is here, and it is complete with all the vocal items from the film. The only one of real interest to Crosby fans however is the title song, which makes its welcome first appearance on disc here. (No doubt all members will already have the Decca single which was reviewed in the last Post.) Robert Farnon does a good job in the musical field but I felt that such items as "Let's Not Be Sensible Blues" and "Moon over Hong Kong" gave this promising little album little support and if anything I found them drab pieces of music. Much better and quite enjoyable is the Overture which opens side one. With a delightful cover featuring the great team, some great shots of the film on the back of the cover, this LP will make a useful addition to many fans of the great stars spotlighted here.

Reviews of the film itself were good with *Variety* saying:

> *The seventh Road comedy, after a lapse of seven years, should cause a seven-year itch among tab buyers to get in at the laughs. For they come thick and fast in this genial piece of nonsense. Perhaps the old formula creaks occasionally, but not enough to cause any disappointment while the zany situations and razor-edge wisecracks keep the whole affair bubbling happily. . . . The result is an amiable comedy which should please nostalgic customers and entice those who haven't seen any of the previous "Road" pix.*
> *(Variety, April 4, 1962)*

Bing and Bob have fun filming *The Road to Hong Kong.*

Bing wrote to Frank regularly and the June issue contained the latest epistle which was dated May 26, 1962 and came from Las Cruces in Baja California.

Dear Frank;

Thanks for your letter. The autographed photo you asked for for Don Woolland is en route.

I was lunching with Bob Hope the other day and we discussed the possibility of doing a picture in India – another Road picture, probably "The Road to Calcutta or "The Road to Bombay".

The Indian Government make some very attractive inducements down there to get people to film in India, and we may be able to work out a mutually agreeable arrangement.

I hope to do the "Devil's Advocate" this fall, but they haven't got a script yet, or a cast, and so the whole project is very much up in the air. I understand they want Alec Guinness for the part, and candor compels me to admit he would certainly be much better – but I would like to try the role if it's offered to me, in any case.

I'm feeling quite well again. I've been down in Mexico off and on almost entirely since February. Just went up to Hollywood to do a television show. It turned out rather well – the TV show. I imagine you'll see it in England soon. Had Bob Hope on, and Gary Crosby, Edie Adams, Pete Fountain and his clarinet, and an act called The Smothers Brothers, who I think you'll find very funny.

I didn't see the show because shortly after taping it, I came back to Mexico for the fishing, but the reviews were uniformly good, and I imagine when you see it, it will entertain you.

Please give my very best to all the members.

Always your friend,

Bing

The release of the 15 LP *Bing's Hollywood* series was

the highlight of the August 1962 magazine. "How does one set about reviewing 189 songs?" was the question Frank posed to his readers. Well he did indeed review them and following this he received a letter from Brunswick manager Geoff Milne (yes, the same Geoff Milne who supplied the discs for Sepia's *Through the Years* CDs and has been a club member since the early 1950s).

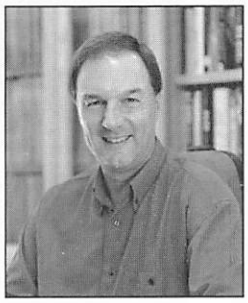
"I am glad to see such wonderful reviews, not only in the *Crosby Post* but also in the national press covering the fifteen Bing albums recently released on the Brunswick label. Believe it or not there are still some people who think these are sound-track recordings – if only they were! Some of the sound-track versions of the film songs would just not be suitable for transfer to LP. Most of the letters we have had here have been very encouraging, but you know, if we issued every Bing record, on every size and speed possible, there would still be those people who say: "Why can't you..." So you see it is very difficult to please the customers all the time. We are still not really certain whether we do the right thing in issuing the 15 albums in one go, but I think everyone will agree that since they are available separately, what difference does it really make if they come out together or individually. If all the club members were to buy these albums over a period of a year, the venture will have been justified.

...Incidentally, it may be of interest to the collectors to know that as far as we can ascertain only two alternative masters were used in the complete set of "Bing's Hollywood". These are as follows: - on BING9 "Would You" is the B master of L3464, and on BING 11 "As Long As I'm Dreaming" is the second master of L4323. I think it is a great pity that New York didn't take the golden opportunity of using more alternative masters, and had there been more time at our disposal and sufficiently good plates available, we could have substituted the alternate masters. We are sorry to say that this was not possible however."

Geoff Milne

KEEPING TRACK

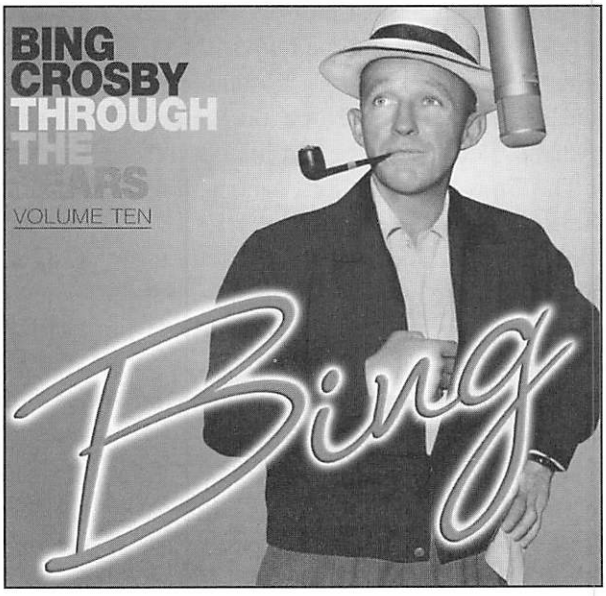
Ken Crossland looks at the new releases



COMPACT DISCS

Bing Crosby - Through The Years, Volume 10 Sepia 1192 UK £7.00/$12.50

1. Happy Holiday 2. Joy to the World 3. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (St. Louis Christmas Carols Association Choir) 4. White Christmas 5. Adeste Fideles (Little Singers of Granby) 6. We Three Kings of Orient Are (Mormon Tabernacle Choir) 7. The First Nowell 8. Carol of the Bells (The Voices Of Christmas) 9. What Christmas Means to Me (Delores Short) 10. Good King Wenceslas 11. Jesus, Sweet Saviour (Neuilly Boys Choir) 12. Angels We Have Heard on High (Reed Warblers Choir) 13. Away in a Manger 14. Thou Descendeth from the Stars (The Vatican Choir) 15. Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly 16. God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen (Dedham Choral Society) 17. O Little Town of Bethlehem 18. Silent Night 19. Happy Holiday (Reprise) 20. Love in a Home 21. Trust Your Destiny to a Star 22. Gigi 23. Church Bells 24. Rain 25. Someday Sweetheart [Take B] 26. Silent Night [Take B] 27. Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town [Take B] 28. There's No Business Like Show Business – [alternate take, with The Andrews Sisters] 29. Go West, Young Man! [Take B - with The Andrews Sisters) 30. Lullaby Land [Take B]



When John McNicholas boldly launched his "Chronological Bing Crosby" series in 1986, it seemed a mammoth - even unbelievable - idea that Bing's entire commercial output might be brought together in a series of long-playing records (CDs then still being something in the new-fangled box). Now, some sixty-odd LPs and CDs later, we come, if not to the end of the road, to a sensible point to stand back and marvel at the achievement. Rights and ownership issues, not to mention copyright laws, stand in the way of the series continuing through the years much beyond the end of Bing's exclusive relationship with American Decca, although most of that material, from 1958 on, has seen its own independent release on compact disc.

This final volume from Sepia, who picked up the mantle for the final few furlongs of the project, takes us through to 1957. With 19 of the 30 tracks coming from the commercial release of

Bing's radio show, "A Christmas Sing With Bing", its not quite the treasure chest of individual titles that other releases have been, although it more than makes up for its festive bias from track 20 onwards. There we have a selection of singles, showing off the mature Crosby voice to great effect, none better than "Gigi", which Bing sings with great tenderness and feeling. Sound quality on these tracks, and especially on "Rain" (an apt title for anyone enduring this year's British summer), is outstandingly clear. To cap it off, we have six alternate takes that were not available when the relevant earlier discs in the series appeared. (Early pressings of this CD included, by error, the A take of "Someday Sweetheart". Anyone who bought the disc via the ICC should have received a replacement, but if you bought it from a third party outlet, check against Malcolm's sleeve notes to see if you have the disc with the correct take, and if not, take it up with Sepia).

But once we move on from "Through The Years", we are it seems, in a period of famine. It's a sign of the times that downloads now outsell CDs and it is perhaps no surprise that scanning the retail sites for new Crosby releases, results in a predominance of albums that are primarily intended to be downloaded, although companies such as Amazon will make a CD up for anyone who wants that format. The range and scope of such releases would take too many pages here for us to track them all, but if there is one track or other that remains elusive to you, check out the sites such as i-tunes and you will probably find it there. New collections include the "Bing Crosby Absolutely Essential 3CD Collection" (a hotchpotch of commercial releases) and "Bing & Louis Live Sessions" (radio material from the early 1950s).

Meantime, the only other conventional CD releases of note that caught my eye were these.

The Best Years of Our Lives - The Most Popular Songs of 1942 **Sounds of Yesteryear**
The Best Years of Our Lives - The Most Popular Songs of 1945 **UK** **£11/$22**

These are part of a series of releases that cover each year of the Forties. Each disc is available on its own. The 1942 release has 15 recordings from 1942 - surprisingly none by Bing - but then includes a radio adaptation of 'Holiday Inn', featuring Bing and Dinah Shore, taken from a Screen Guild broadcast of January 1943. It was previously available on Spokane 15 in LP form. The 1945 release is similar, with two Crosby tracks this time included in the individual items plus the radio adaptation of 'The Bells of St Mary's' originally broadcast in October 1947, featuring Bing with Ingrid Bergman and Joan Carroll. This again is the version that appeared on Spokane 15.

DVD

As with the CDs, it's a time of thin pickings on the DVD front. The only notable release is the appearance of Bing's 1960 film "High Time" on blu-ray disc. This technology offers high definition picture quality and as such, the discs will not play on standard DVD players. Whether the film warrants such a high-tech treatment is debatable, coming as it did when Bing's film career was limping to a close. Stand out moment from the film is Bing's rendition of "The Second Time Around", although even that is low key.

What's on the Web?

Our friends at eBay came up with an interesting set of seven Vitaphone discs from "The King of Jazz" which fetched a handsome $566 at auction. What's Vitaphone, you may ask. Well, part of the history of talking pictures is the answer. The seller on eBay posted this description of the process.

"Vitaphone was a sound film process used on feature films and nearly 1,000 short subjects produced by Warner Bros. and its sister studio First National from 1926 to 1930. Vitaphone was the last, but most successful, of the sound-on-disc processes. The soundtrack was not printed on the actual film, but was issued separately on 16 inch (40 cm) and, later, 12 inch (30 cm) phonograph discs recorded at 33 1/3 rpm, a speed first used for this process. The discs would be played on a turntable indirectly coupled to the projector motor while the film was being projected. Many early talkies, such as 'The Jazz Singer (1927), used the Vitaphone process."

Meantime, the Official Bing Crosby website is always worth a visit at www.bingcrosby.com, this summer having

featured an Easter tribute to Bing, tying in to what would have been his 109th birthday, and also featuring an interesting four-minute segment on Bing with Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney and Louis Armstrong from the 1957 Edsel show. Rumours have abounded for some time that good quality videotape recordings exist of that show, and indeed that it was the first ever use of that technology. Most of us however have had to make do with inferior Kinescope versions, but the quality of the footage on the Crosby site seems to suggest that something better does exist. Let's hope that Bing Crosby Enterprises have a release in their sights.

Happy listening!

ken@kencrossland.co.uk http://www.kencrossland.co.uk

Announcement

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

47th ANNUAL DINNER / MEETING

Weetwood Hall, Conference Centre & Hotel

Otley Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 5PS, UK

Telephone: 0113 230 6000

Website: www.weetwood.co.uk

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7th 2012, 2pm - 10pm

A cordial and warm invitation is extended to all members, their partners and friends to attend our forthcoming dinner / meeting. This is the 47th annual dinner held in Leeds to celebrate Bing's life and times, and as usual, we shall have some interesting DVD material for you to see, using the excellent facilities at Weetwood Hall available for this purpose.

We have kept the official start time at 2 p.m. to enable us to pack more into the time we have but apart from this, tracks from the latest Crosby CDs will be playing from 1 p.m. onwards alongside a PowerPoint presentation of Bing photos.

A three-course Carvery Dinner will be provided. Please book by sending a cheque for £24.50 per person to Michael Crampton. Y'All Come! You will be amongst friends.

Special bed and breakfast prices of £68 (single) and £88 (double) have been agreed for ICC visitors wishing to stay overnight at Weetwood Hall. We'll have a get-together on the Saturday night with whoever is there

Bing, Racehorses, and Argentina

Martin Knight, a young man who lives in Argentina and one of whose grandfathers was English, was involved with his family in sorting out some old gramophone records. Martin apparently discovered he liked some of those featuring Bing and started asking questions. He was then told stories about his family's connection with Bing, and contacted our Richard Baker for more information. Richard encouraged him to write about his family's involvement with Bing and we have pleasure in producing his article here.

Readers of BING might be interested in a couple of brief episodes of Bing's life which touched on my family. I will also give some anecdotes passed down my family that I believe are interesting. I live in Argentina and my family was at one time involved in the rearing of horses. As all will know, Bing was deeply involved in horse racing and owned several horses.

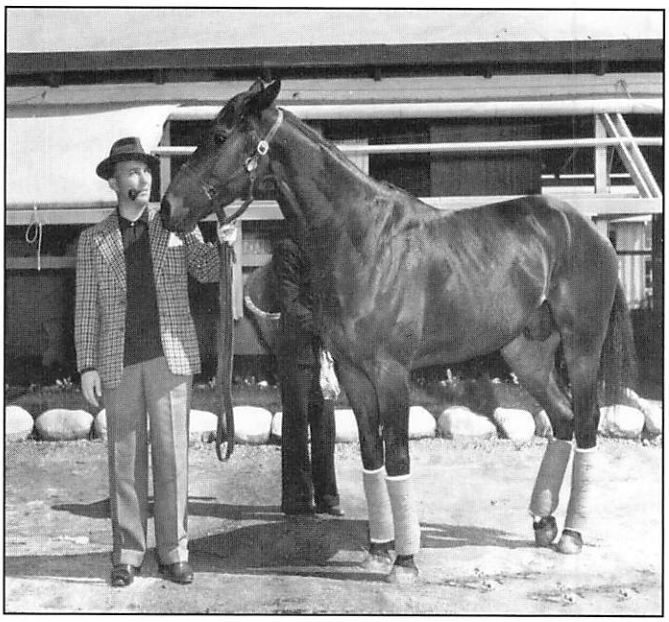
In the 1930s, Bing had purchased two horses from my great-grandfather with Lindsay Howard's advice. Mr Howard was a polo player and he came to Argentina often and even played polo with some members of my family - my great-great-uncles, probably, among other players.

The horses were "Ligaroti" and "Kajak", which in the USA was renamed "Kayak II" to avoid a conflict of names.

Things started off well for "Ligaroti" but he seems to have "faded". On the other hand "Kayak II" did rather better winning 14 races and finished in the money in 23 of his 26 starts in the U.S. Substituting for injured stablemate Seabiscuit, Kayak II won the 1939 Santa Anita Handicap then finished second to Seabiscuit in the 1940 edition. Ligaroti did of course compete in a very

famous race at Del Mar in 1938 which is covered in some detail on an Internet site called "horseracegame".

"For those who have only seen the movie Seabiscuit, when you hear of a match race the great champion took part in you would naturally think of the November 1, 1938 mega-event between him and War Admiral. However, the movie left out quite a bit of the exploits of the horse that the filmmakers felt would either not be dramatic enough or would prolong the film. For whatever reason, one such casualty was a different match race Seabiscuit ran in earlier in that same year of 1938.



Bing and Ligaroti in 1938.

Del Mar Race Track had just opened up in 1937 and was not yet considered one of the major tracks in California. The famous entertainer Bing Crosby owned the track, and enlisted the help of his friend and owner of Seabiscuit, Charles S. Howard, to create an event in 1938 that would get people excited to come to Del Mar. The idea was for Seabiscuit to be pitted in a match race against a horse by the name of Ligaroti, who had done very well in South America and had been purchased by Crosby and Lin Howard, Charles' son.

The owners of the two horses decided to put up a $25,000 winner take all purse, and there was no public wagering allowed. Upon hearing that, you might think that not many people showed up at Del Mar for the big race. However, you would be wrong. In fact, a Del Mar record 20,000 people came to see the race. The race also has the unique distinction of being the very first horse race that NBC radio announced live to a nationwide audience.

Seabiscuit was ridden not by Red Pollard, as he had been injured early in 1938, but instead by the great George Woolf. Because he had raced against, and beaten, Ligaroti twice before, Seabiscuit was assigned an impost of 130 pounds to Ligaroti's 115. The South American horse was ridden by a man named Noel Richardson.

Seabiscuit took the lead at the outset, but Ligaroti closed the gap on the backstretch. For almost the entire duration of the race, Woolf and Richardson were literally engaged in hand-to-hand combat in which they grabbed, pushed, pulled. This kind of thing was actually common in racing at that time, and most of the time when foul was claimed by a rider there wasn't much that could be done, unless the transgression was totally obvious. However, the stewards had employed film patrol of the race, which consisted of the entire event being filmed from several different angles. After the finish of the race, which Seabiscuit won by a nose, Richardson had claimed foul against Woolf, and a lengthy inquiry was held. Woolf never denied what he had done, but said it was in retaliation to Richardson's actions. In the end, the stewards thought that both men were guilty of fouls, but that they in effect cancelled each other out, so the result of the race stood. However, as a warning to other jockeys trying to do the same thing in the future, the stewards ended up fining and suspending both riders. With the institution of film patrol at most major tracks, the number of fouls was undoubtedly curtailed.

Lin Howard and Bing enjoy a drink together

The story of this race was so dramatic that Laura Hillenbrand dedicated an entire chapter of her best-selling book Seabiscuit to an in-depth accounting of this historic match up. She was able to find the official chart of the race, the NBC radio call, and was even able to track down the reports the stewards had written concerning the post-race inquiry. I highly recommend reading the entire book, but make sure not to skip that chapter because it is incredible, and provides a fascinating window into what racing was like before the cameras filmed every second like today."

This was not our only involvement, because I was told that Bing returned to this country several times, and much later, he was back to see my family with his wife. The place at which Bing stayed was "Estancia El Abolengo" in the province of Santa Fe. My family

remembers that Bing came with his wife but they don't remember any children.

According to my great-aunt and as stated in the newspapers Bing was here from June 4-18, 1970, with his wife. I have been able to trace a report from Leon Balter, an Argentinian reporter who on this occasion was himself interviewed about his experiences as a reporter. Balter was the man who interviewed Bing on his visit to Buenos Aires in 1970.

The interview was of course reported in Spanish and is quite lengthy, but I quote suitable parts of it about Bing in translation.

Q."*Have you ever interviewed anyone on TV?*
A. Only one person; Bing Crosby. I remember that before the interview I saw a limo arrive at the studio; inside there was a bald person, who was very elegant. Bing wore a toup e. A few minutes later, he arrived with his hairdresser and we could interview him. I was very surprised when he mentioned that he considered Carlos Gardel one of the most important singers in the world. Believe it or not, he (Bing) had a large number of records of Gardel and he ranked Gardel 5th in a list of popular singers of all time. According to Bing, Al Jolson was ranked 1st, then Tony Bennett in 2nd place, followed by Frank Sinatra in 3rd place and fourth ... he placed himself!
Q. Would you consider Crosby a musicologist?
A. No, he was actually a great professional. He also told me that he had come to Argentina on several occasions incognito and that he owned a ranch in the Litoral."

I must explain that Carlos Gardel was a very famous Argentinean singer particularly associated with the Tango, although he died as long ago as 1935. Obviously Bing had done some homework and was being polite to his guests.

****

I have been told several stories about the time Bing stayed in Santa Fe in 1941.

One day Bing was asking my grandfather (who was then a teenager): "What's the Spanish word for ....?" He asked about many words, one of them was "rubbish" and my father answered "porquer a" which in Argentina means the same (though not in Spain). But he never thought for a moment that Bing would remember all the words. Then they went to have lunch.

My grandfather had made a pipe out of wood and corn and he kept it hidden in his pocket. Bing took it out of his pocket and holding the pipe in the air for everyone to see, he exclaimed: "Porquer a!"

And my grandfather turned round, very surprised and said: "Mr. Crosby, you are a 'pick-pocketter'!" Bing went very serious and my grandfather thought: "Wow! He's angry!" And Bing told him: "I've been called many things in my life but never, never a 'pick-pocketter'!" Everybody laughed and my grandfather couldn't understand why until they told him the word 'pick-pocketter' didn't exist.

He also realised when Bing was about to tease him because according to my grandfather Bing's eyes narrowed and shone differently. So my grandfather would tell him: "Oh no, Mr Crosby, don't do that!"

"Do what? I haven't done anything."

"But you will, you have that look in your eyes!!! I can tell."

And Bing would laugh.

I think Bing found it amusing that my grandfather could speak with him in English, even though he was a boy. But my grandfather and his brother and sisters attended an English school here in Buenos Aires which was why they could speak English.

On another occasion Bing asked my grandfather to take him to a nearby river. It was very early in the morning and they both went walking. When they reached the trees at the riverside, Bing stood still and after a short while he began to whistle, imitating the sounds made by the birds. My father was amazed at how soon he had picked up those sounds because, naturally, those birds were local birds and very likely, Bing had never heard them before.

One day, at four o'clock in the morning, Bing went into my grandfather's bedroom and woke him up. When my grandfather managed to open his eyes, Bing told him:

"Come on, wake up! You, lazy boy! Remember you promised to take me to the river."

My grandfather looked at the alarm clock and grunted:

"Mr. Crosby, do you have any idea what time it is? It's 4 o'clock in the morning! The sun doesn't rise until half past six!!!"

"Oh, I see." replied Bing. "Well, anyway, you are fully awake by now, so get up and let's go! Come on!"

And he pulled the blankets away so my grandfather could not go back to sleep.

Martin Knight

(Editor: Fascinating to read of these interactions with Bing in a foreign land. As far as we know, Bing only visited Argentina in 1941 and in 1970. To complete the picture about Bing's horse Ligaroti — he dropped dead on February 23, 1945 at Binglin Farm having been in stud for the last few seasons.)

Bing Crosby

February 28, 1974

Dear Mr. Wolfe:

Thank you for your very kind letter. I was interested in what you had to say about the old radio shows that are now available and on sale.

I'm going to have to get somebody looking into this and see if I can acquire copies for my files.

I've always wanted to have a complete file of everything that has ever been released publicly.

I'm grateful to you for reminding me about it.

Thanks, also, for your kind comments about me and my work through the years. It's gratifying to know that I've been able to amuse and entertain people in this country as well as abroad.

Very best wishes to you -

Always your friend,

Bing

Bing Crosby

BC:lm

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